Teaching the English Functional Skills qualification to SEN pupils a narrative research study of teachers' beliefs

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Abstract:

The task of teaching English, or literacy, to pupils designated as 'having SEN' is commonly dominated by a conceptualisation of deficit in relation to said pupils, and an 'autonomous' model of understanding literacy. I examine English teaching in a particular professional context: a SEN specialist teaching service commissioned to deliver the English Functional Skills Qualification (FSQ) to a number of pupils with SEN studying in mainstream secondary schools. This study is positioned to address a gap in scholarship theorising the ideological and pedagogical underpinnings of the FSQ seen in relation to wider trends in educational policy and SEN education. The study is best understood as a contribution in the field of curriculum studies and as a socially-informed investigation of SEN, set in a professional context.

A qualitative approach was adopted to allow the emergence of the voices of participants – 8 SEN teachers – in relation to the way they conceptualise literacy and its relationship to their pupils' life chances and their curriculum design considerations in relation to textual choices. Acknowledging that the FSQ curriculum as taught in this context is a unique, and to a degree discrete aspect of pupils' schooling, a narrative approach is used here in an attempt to offer a heuristic view of the qualification from its policy genesis to the point of classroom teaching. The analysis comprises of a narration of the 'story of the FSQ'; narrative accounts of 8 semi-structured interviews with participating teachers as well as further conversations and correspondences; thematic analyses of the narrative accounts. The analysis carried out reveals that while teachers broadly accept the relevance of the functional literacy paradigm to their work they equally are awake to its inherent tensions and limitations. They, in fact, demonstrated how they enact the curriculum in ways which at times negate or significantly expand upon it.

Tracing a state-sanctioned qualification in literacy from its inception to its delivery allows a vantage point to observe discourse as it is translated into pedagogic practice. The story of the FSQ as it is presented here in a particular professional context shows how powerful linguistic devices which present 'common sense' articulations of key social and educational concepts might be vulnerable to interpretations different from those originally intended. This study presents literacy teaching as a complex, often contradictory enterprise; it emphasises – and advocates – the need for practitioners to question its purposes, both educational and social.

This study is to be seen also with regard to my IFS study, which examined similar questions and explored these eliciting the views of pupils with SEN; some of whom were taught by the teachers taking part in the current study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, context and rationale

This qualitative study interrogates the English Functional Skills Qualification (FSQ) as it is taught to pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) by a specialist teaching service working in a number of secondary mainstream schools. The prism through which this study examines the FSQ is the conceptualizations teachers have about it: the purpose they conceive of teaching literacy to this student body, the types of literacy they seek to teach, and the ways in which they link their work with pupils' life chances.

My aim is to critique the English FSQ by exposing it to teachers' considerations. I suggest throughout this study that this qualification has obvious connections to the functional literacy paradigm in its many manifestations in theory, policy and practice. I therefore critique this paradigm in the same manner. I justify this course of action by assuming that both qualification and paradigm rely on a taken-for granted, 'common sense' posture (Fairclough, 2001b; Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 2005) which – inherent to its very nature – is not commonly examined.

In narrative terms, the relationship between the FSQ and the teachers teaching it is the driver of the plot. Accordingly, the overarching question this study seeks to answer, is to what degree is the FSQ a suitable framework to fulfil their educational aims? This question involves reflections on the particular purpose of 'teaching SEN', on what it is to be literate; on social disadvantage and how it relates to what happens in one's lessons. Attempting to impose some order on the flow of such questions, I posit three which probe, respectively, the nature and social significance of literacy, practice implications of this on curricular choices, and the relevance of the critical pedagogy framework to the educational work described here.

My research questions:

- Which types of literacies are privileged in the Functional Skills curriculum? Does this privileging align with teachers' conceptualisations of literacy teaching (e.g. teachers' beliefs about the purpose of literacy teaching)?
- What types of texts (as source material) are seen as important in the instruction of literacy by SEN teachers? How do teachers go about curricular design of the English FSQ sessions?

- What role do teachers see for literacy instruction in the education of SEN students and more generally on their life chances?

Professional context: In this study, eight teachers who teach or have recently taught the English FSQ to pupils with SEN were interviewed to understand how they conceptualize the questions above. This group of teachers are, or were at the time of beginning this study, members of a specialist teaching service within a disability and educational charity. The teaching service works as an outside agency, commissioned by mainstream schools to deliver 'interventions' (DfE, 2015) for pupils who have been identified as 'having SEN'. At the time of writing this study, I managed this team, and was previously a member of it. Since 2011, one such intervention was the delivery of the English FSQ to individuals or small groups of pupils in the post-16 phase of study. This was typically in place of the English GCSE qualification, assuming that success chances for this qualification were slim, and therefore the FSQ was used as a 'fall-back' qualification (Rodeiro, 2018). In our service, we have found an increased demand for teaching the English FSQ as a response to SEN-related low attainment. It seemed that a particular pattern of response to SEN in the arena of literacy began holding an established position. Broadly, this response appears to be related to two policy trends: in the SEN context (see the SEN Code of Practice, DfE, 2015) an increased emphasis on transition to adulthood and the world of work. In the literacy context, a policy push towards a skill-based conceptualization correlating with 'business needs' and wider government industrial policy (see, for example, CBI, 2011). Both trends present potential problematics: does the kind of literacy instruction offered within these conceptualizations limit the life chances of these pupils? Do they encourage a 'within-child' approach to SEN (Lindsay, 2003), and risk pathologizing these pupils? Does the 'common sense' (Levine, 1982) approach which privileges a functional literacy curriculum demand too heavy a price, for example by abandoning any literary input? Is the qualification in fact promoting low-skilled employment and a limited version of citizenry? These questions are very real for me and the teaching team as we go about designing a literacy curriculum, coming as we do from differing teaching disciplinary backgrounds, and being aware of the many competing versions of literacy. Finally, as a special needs teaching service, our aim is to improve our pupils' chances of meeting the challenges they face. My research is driven by the apprehension we might in fact be entrenching disadvantage despite our best intentions.

Settings: the sample included all sites where teachers from the team taught the English FSQ. The FSQ teaching referred to in this study includes 1:1 sessions as well as group lessons. The latter would typically be groups of between three and six pupils designated as 'having SEN' within a mainstream school system. All the schools referred to in this study are Jewish schools in London. However, it is important to note that these include both state-aided schools which are culturally located within the modern orthodox community, and independent, private schools, which serve sections of the Ultra-Orthodox (Charedi) community. The interviews all took place on the charity's facilities.

Policy context: the convergence of the areas of SEN and literacy teaching brings with it a number of policy pressures which are material to this investigation. SEN should be seen as an enterprise with increasing levels of 'accountability' and financial consequence. Literacy, within this context, is both seen as a 'marker' of special needs (that is, one form of need in itself; an area for assessment), and a core curricular area, where increased scrutiny exists of pupils' results and progress.

When considering SEN and literacy instruction, it is the case that often emphasis is given to models of deficiency. This is partly due to forms of learning challenges which are specifically tied to literacy, such as dyslexia, which are often, within the 'SEN world' referred to collectively as Specific Learning Difficulties (Walker and Shaw, 2018). In addition, many of the prevalent diagnoses (e.g. ASD; SEMH challenges; ADHD) are associated with general barriers to learning including behavioural challenges which will have impact on their literacy acquisition, and in later years, their levels of attainment. In policy, then, low attainment in literacy is one of the factors in recognizing SEN (see, for instance, DfE, 2010); low attainment in literacy can also potentially be associated with at least three of the four areas of need as described in the SEN CoP (DfE, 2015) in a straightforward way (Communication and interaction; Cognition and learning; Social, emotional and mental health).

Government policy, and the documentation which accompanies qualifications is clear about the importance of English education: the English national curriculum framework (DfE, 2014a), for instance, warns that those who do not acquire a level of confidence in their English studies become "effectively disenfranchised". The National Curriculum Guidelines document (DfE, 2014b), points to the link between the study of English and all other academic areas: "Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects". Clearly, then,

demonstrating sufficient capacity in English is a key factor in schools' outcome measurements. It is important to note that the new accountability framework adopted in England, the Progress 8, does not recognize non-GCSE English qualifications (Gill, 2017). Schools, therefore, accept they might pay a price in respect of their league table performance when they register pupils to the FSQ. Finally, within the accountability framework associated with SEN work in particular, the 2014 Code of Practice (DfE, 2015: 130) emphasizes transition to adulthood, and within that clearly sets the expectation that pupils "take rigorous, substantial qualifications" and "study English and maths". This expectation is firmly located within a conceptual framework which ties literacy (and numeracy) to future employment prospects. This argument directly links literacy with personal earning power, but also puts forward a utilitarian argument which suggests that increased employability for those with recognised SEND can "reduce lifetime support costs to the public purse by around £1 million".

In summary, teaching English and literacy qualifications to pupils with SEN is fraught by policy pressures. Pupils' capacity to achieve in the arena of literacy is often perceived to be compromised by SEN; this in turn can bring them into the SEN category. This means that pressure is mounted on these pupils and their teachers (and, by extension, the school system), to demonstrate that they are making progress within this arena of learning. The scrutiny within the accountability frameworks (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2017) associated with neo-liberal societies is increased two-fold. This is due to, in the first instance, the expansion of the 'SEN industry' (Tomlinson, 2012) and the commissioning aspects of the new Code of Practice (Allan and Youdell, 2017). Secondly, as a consequence of the way current policy makes explicit links between attainment in literacy and future employment prospects, including the wider utilitarian argument about the 'cost' of those who fail to live independently and gain employment.

The IFS Study:

This study is conducted as part of a professional Doctorate in Education and follows a smaller-scale study concerned with similar questions. That study elicited the thoughts and experiences of the pupils and the current study expands upon the same themes to examine practitioners' views. The IFS study was located within one setting only and in that respect was different from the sample adopted here. However, that one setting is a meaningful part of the current study as well, and the pupils interviewed in the IFS study were taught by three of the teachers

participating here. It is worth briefly outlining the major themes which emerged from that study.

The FSQ as a lesser qualification in relation to English GCSE: all the pupils interviewed saw the FSQ as a lesser qualification, echoing a long-standing issue with the qualifications' status (Francis, 2014; The Education and Training Foundation, 2015). While clearly differentiated by status from the English GCSE, pupils didn't in the main recognize the particular 'functional' agenda of the qualification. That is, those aspects of the qualification which tie in with policy, such as an emphasis on 'everyday life', and employability prospects did not translate to pupils' perception of it.

English / literacy as having limited import and equating to a discrete academic discipline: participants portrayed the study of English as the particular academic discipline, contradicting the aforementioned policy emphasis on English study as crucial both to long-term well-being (i.e. avoiding being 'disenfranchised') and to wider educational success. In different ways, participants articulated a vision of achieving their aims while not making progress in their literacy studies.

Conceptualizing literacy as social practice: the pupils in the IFS study formulated some sophisticated ideas about the links between literacy practices (e.g. specific vocabulary patterns) and social status and power. Equally, they generally expressed the view that they were excluded from these same arenas of power. This was demonstrated by the abstract way they referred to sources of power in society.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the literature review which follows, I wish to make explicit the conceptualizations of key terms interrogated in this study. I further aim to relate the questions addressed in the study to wider academic debates in the arena of sociology of education, curricular studies, literacy studies and SEN / disability studies. I explore curriculum and its correspondence with social relations and notions of 'knowledge'; competing paradigms which inform understandings of literacy as a taught subject; and SEN as a discrete educational enterprise, including the current governing framework in England.

1. The curriculum

Working definition: the curriculum investigated in this study is the English FSQ, and its "specific objectives, learning activities, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures" (Sirotnik, 1988: 58). It constitutes though, a part of the wider curriculum pupils undertake in their schools. I will endeavour to keep in mind both the particularities of this literacy curriculum and its place within the wider school curriculum. UNESCO (2017) defines the curriculum as a societal concept: the "important teaching and learning constitutes the "intended" curriculum"; in recognition of the complexities of classroom life, another layer is added in the form of the 'implemented' curriculum- what is actually 'delivered'. What is assessed and can be demonstrated to have been achieved is the 'learned' curriculum. Finally, the 'hidden curriculum' is the "unintended development of personal values and beliefs of learners, teachers and communities".

It is also worth noting Dewey's (1959) notion that "the child and the curriculum are two limits that define a single process"; this designates the curriculum as a process rather than an immobile product. As Simpson and Jackson (2003: 5) note, the implication of Dewey's conceptualization of curriculum and learning is that "learning needs to be seen as a dynamic, reconstructive, complex, and personal process". I believe this is an important statement in relation to the study that follows: it reinforces the need to interrogate the FSQ as a lived experience as well as a planned set of materials and activities; of taking account of the social aspects of out-of-school lives and previous experiences of both pupil and teachers; and, finally, justifies the exploration of teachers' beliefs and experiences as crucial agents in educating for literacy. This section seeks to respond to the following questions: how does my research relate to the body of research around curriculum studies, and in particular theories of reproduction?

How might I conceptualise the FSQ in relation to ideas from the sociology of knowledge? What are the implications of the absence of literary content in the FSQ? How can the FSQ be understood historically as a variety of school English?

1. a. Linking curriculum and the social-political context: amongst the key avenues of investigation in my research are the perceived links between literacy instruction and pupils' 'life chances'; this is broadly taken, within government policy, to be related to the ability to "have a sustained education, employment or training destination" (DfE, 2017). Before addressing the particularities of the English FSQ, it is important to draw upon the scholarship which articulates the connections between school curricula, school-based knowledge and dominant social structures.

I do not find these ideas in any way abstract: during my teacher training, I was placed in an inner-city Further Education college, where I taught English literature and language. The types of curricular and content demands placed upon the pupils obviously jarred with their own socio-economic and cultural background. Put simply, it was clear that the types of literacies and knowledge which were privileged and legitimated were foreign to the pupil body; it was equally clear that these pupils were at a disadvantage in relation to the assessment mechanisms which privileged, endorsed and required the same literacies and body of cultural knowledge. Yet it took a certain type of scholarship to formulate these thoughts clearly in my mind; this was when, writing an assignment on critical pedagogy, I first read Ideology and Curriculum (Apple, 2004b). While by no means a sole operator in this field, which I will call critical curriculum theory, in this first section I follow some of Michael Apple's work in order to untangle the complicated ties between the curriculum and the social-economic sphere.

In Ideology and Curriculum (2004b), Apple positions schools 'relationally'; he urges us to see them "as political structures in a political and economic society" (Foshay, 1992: 78). The thrust of this argument is that schools seen in this way become agents of 'reproduction' of unequal – and unjust – societies. Apple draws upon the Marxist tradition to present this image, and relates it to the broader question of the relationship between base and superstructure (Williams, 1991; Althusser, 1971) and employs at length the Gramscian concept of Hegemony (Mouffe, 2014). This is a 'lived system' (Apple, 1979) which, by way of concessions to the subaltern section of society achieves acquiescence with the dominant culture's privilege and leadership (for a discussion on the Gramscian version of hegemony, see Cox, 1983).

As for analysing the curriculum itself in this fashion, a prominent aspect which is both at the heart of Apple's work and easily applicable to the FSQ is the notion of 'selectivity'. It will be important to examine both the present and the absent content of the FSQ as 'value-laden'. Thus, for example, an interrogation which takes the calls for 'relationality' seriously needs to be directed at the absence of any literary content from the assessment framework of the FSQ. Equally, the same type of interrogation will be applied to adaptations put in place by teachers themselves. The intention, to clarify, is to present a view from 'inside the black box' (Apple and Weis, 1986): a nuanced analysis that goes beyond a simplistic attribution of a reproduction function to school and curricula.

The structural analysis of education as outlined briefly above, came as an antidote to the lack of social context in what Apple and Weis (1986) called the psychological, or 'achievement' tradition, where the focus of study is the nature of child development and learning (see also Carr and Kemmis, 2003). In subsequent research, which sought to link schools and curricula with the wider ideological economic and political structures three important 'functions' were identified (Apple and Weis, 1986). It is useful to relate these general concepts to the particular context of teaching the English FSQ to pupils with SEN:

Accumulation is the structural process by which groups accumulate capital within the school system. This in turn produces a hierarchical work force, which reproduces an unequal economy with a stratified labour force (Bernstein, 1977), in line with Bourdieu's work on cultural capital (Swartz, 1977). Apple and Weis (1986: 9) write: "different groups of students are taught different norms, skills, values, knowledge, and dispositions by race, class, and sex". Apart from the absence of a category of SEN, this process is very much in line with the introduction of the FSQ to a small group of pupils within a school, selecting them due to their SEN and perceived low attainment.

Legitimation denotes the function schools play in portraying both themselves as institutions and society at large as inherently "moving toward greater social and economic justice" (Apple and Weis, 1986). This function sheds a revealing light on the language used by both the FSQ policy documents and SEND policy. Ostensibly, the FSQ is presented as a tool to enhance pupils' "chances of securing a job and progressing within employment or Further Education." (DfE, 2017a); similarly, the SEND Code of Practice declares the intention that SEND pupils will benefit from opportunities identical to their non-SEND peers: "that they achieve well in

their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives". These are two examples of the kind of language used, which when scrutinised might bring up objections (e.g. why is the prospect of *higher* education not mentioned in the FSQ outline? Is it true that most non-SEND pupils end up living 'happy and fulfilled lives'? What is the meaning in concrete terms of this type of life?). For the purpose of this study, then, it will be imperative to consider the way curricular documentation presents itself as potentially tied in with its social function of legitimation.

Production is the process in which educational systems play a role in generating the required knowledge for the prevailing mode of production – or a "training grounds for future employees". This point is relevant to the explicit links the FSQ declares to the wider economy. Another aspect of *production*, though, is the reductive orientation of curricular and testing regimes employed by schools. Here, Apple and Weis argue, the cultural sphere itself is reduced to the "application of technical rules and procedures". Curricular activities, then, tend to move from questions of 'why' into the acquisition of skills (questions of 'how to'). This again is reminiscent of the rationale presented by the DfE for the promotion of the FSQ: to enable pupils to "apply their skills in everyday life and work" (DfE, 2017).

These three functions suggested a case for adopting a critical approach to the curricular practices discussed in this study: they are material to the labelling and social positioning of pupils with SEN; the possible role played by overt curricular discourse and policy in legitimating unequal social relations; and in the potential risk of the FSQ functioning as a 'productive' process which ultimately ties pupils to a given role in the labour market. Having said this, however, Apple and Weis (1986: 11) are clear about the dangers of 'reductionism'; the assertion of a simple "one-to-one correspondence between economics and culture". This is a crucial point which is worth briefly expanding upon, as moving away from a deterministic vision of education is a necessity if we are to take seriously the importance of teachers' work.

Schools – pupils and teachers – often reject dominant knowledge and ideologies (Apple and Weis, 1986; Giroux, 1983; Hammersley and Woods, 2017). In this study, teachers' perspectives on what might be perceived as 'dominant ideologies' around literacy, SEN and pedagogy will be sought. It should not be taken as assumed that all teaching is indeed 'reproductive': some pedagogy might be in fact seen as 'resistance'. Secondly, schooling could be both reproductive in its ideology and contradictory at the same time. Relating this point to

specific examples which are material to this investigation might be illuminating. If we accept *prima facie* that the FSQ English curriculum acts to produce a 'functionally' literate (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002; Shor, 1999) work force with the implications of limited critical training and restricted access to cultural capital, this contradicts other aims of the legitimation function. For example, the policy drives to "close the attainment gap for pupils with achievement below the national average in literacy and numeracy" (National College for Teaching and Learning, 2016) are linked to an explicit aim to support improved life chances for disadvantaged groups (DfE, 2017c). Indeed, within the field of SEN, the legislative framework introduced in 2014 (DfE, 2015) advocates inclusive practice and enabling pupils full access to school's curriculum. The point demonstrated in both examples is that curricula and school ideology at times appear to fulfil conflicting functions.

The 'functions' of schools in society as described above are part of a particular vision of education and society, which is anchored in the critical pedagogy tradition (McLaren, 1995; Giroux, 1983). Having accepted this as a starting point to my study, it is important to shed light on some of the limitations and dangers associated with this standpoint. Firstly, despite the great efforts made by critical thinkers to create a more nuanced version of the relationship between the economic and the socio-educational spheres, as Foshay (1992) comments, beyond the economic, cultural and moral aspects of 'being human' there is a lack of acknowledgment and analysis of other aspects of human life: the physical, aesthetic, emotional and spiritual.

A second point worth keeping in mind in relation to the present study is the absence of pupils with SEND as an acknowledged group potentially associated with a particular type of disadvantage. This is a common feature of critical pedagogy scholarship (see Goodley, 2007, in relation to Giroux) and it requires some dedicated deliberation using a separate body of literature found in disability studies.

1. b. The Functional Skills Qualification and the Sociology of School Knowledge:

I wish to problematize the FSQ as a curricular choice in respect of a given pupil body. This questions both what is included in the body of knowledge which the qualification encompasses, and what is not. On the theoretical level of curriculum analysis, Young (2013) asks: "what do students have an entitlement to learn?" The question of how a particular body of knowledge becomes part of pedagogy was addressed by Basil Bernstein (1990), in scholarship which is

"famous for its complex, formal and generative character" (Bernstein and Solomon, 1999: 265). While I will not be able to reflect this complexity in full, below I attempt to set out in very brief terms Bernstein's concept of the process of 'pedagogising knowledge' and try to unpick the implications of this conceptualization to our understanding the FSQ. A wider survey of the FSQ as it relates to other forms of 'school English' will follow later in this chapter.

I wish to relate to a very specific and limited aspect of Bernstein's work, notwithstanding the complexity of his overall theory, and therefore making no claim to represent sufficiently the totality of Bernstein's work on the sociology of knowledge. Bernstein (2000) set out a set of rules which govern the way different forms of knowledge are 'converted into pedagogic communication' (Singh, 2010) within a given society. Bernstein designated three interrelated *rules* which constitute the ways in which texts become privileged in the school context. The three rules are the distributive, recontextualising and evaluative. In the broadest terms, the distribution refers to ways knowledge is assigned to different social groups, hence creating variance in pedagogic identities. Recontextualising involves changing the original body of knowledge into 'pedagogised' knowledge. Finally, the evaluative rules govern the mechanisms for 'recognising what counts as valid acquisition' (Singh, 2010: 573) in curricular and regulatory terms.

Within the educational field, pedagogised knowledge will be either contested or maintained by 'agents' (Singh, 2010) within education departments, schools etc. They make up the three fields of the pedagogic device: the field of production, the field of recontextualisation, and the field of reproduction. I propose a link between these fields and the way in which knowledge is pedagogised in the FSQ. This might illuminate some aspects of the ways the FSQ as taught to SEN pupils plays a role in positioning them socially. The two fields I would like to interrogate here in relation to the FSQ are production and recontextualisation. Bernstein (2000) creates a distinction between two types of knowledge: "the common/mundane (horizontal discourse) and esoteric/sacred (vertical discourses)" (Singh, 2010). Elsewhere, Bernstein (Bernstein and Solomon, 1999) typified these as knowledge generated in 'everyday life' and official institutions respectively. It is esoteric knowledge which according to Bernstein becomes disciplinary knowledge, and finds its place in "scientific research communities, literary and artistic organisations" (Singh, 2010: 575). The knowledge base informing the FSQ – broadly speaking, generic sets of skills associated with reading, writing and oral seem to be clearly common or mundane; in fact, the term 'everyday life' mentioned earlier appears consistently

in the FSQ policy documents (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2010; House of Commons Public accounts Committee, 2008). The origins of the English FSQ in this model are not those which were historically associated with the production of academic disciplines (unlike the literary canon which informs much of the English GCSE qualification). My point here is not so much about the content of the FSQ, as about the origin of the knowledge and its 'route'. When you add the concept of 'boundary' to the picture, the suspicion of exclusion by curriculum comes up. Boundaries 'insulate' each field (Singh, 2010) and create 'specialist identities' of different agencies and discourses. Within the field of production of knowledge, then, there exists a 'boundary' between the 'vertical' and 'specialist' knowledge of literary English as is pedagogised in the English GCSE and the 'horizontal', 'everyday life' knowledge of the FSQ.

It is important not to overstate the dichotomy between the English FSQ and other national language qualifications such as the GCSE: there is a wealth of literature demonstrating that to a great degree the development of school English was fostered within the pedagogical field. Examples of these debates include the relationship between the 'functional' approach and more traditional forms of school English (Isaacs, 2014), the place and function of grammar within English qualifications (Clarke, 2010) as well as the ongoing debates surveyed in the sub-chapter addressing the development of school English. Indeed, Marshall et al. (2018) present English teachers' deliberations of English curricula in ways that are not dissimilar to those undertaken by participants in this study. Ball (1982) made the point that inherent tensions within the arena of school English between competing 'paradigms', demonstrate that the discipline of English is in no meaningful sense a neatly delineated one. In fact, Ball takes issue specifically with Bernstein's failure to acknowledge the sometimes 'mutually exclusive definitions' of the subject as seen by teachers of English – even within the same department. This limitation of Bernstein's work is acknowledged here: school English, including the non-FSQ qualifications such as the GCSE, is not an uncontested, monolithic body of knowledge. As Peim (2009: 150) claims, Bernstein himself did not have "any specific interest in questions about English"; the degree to which his conceptual framework suits school English can be seen, then, as uncertain. In fact, Peim argues that school English failed to materialise as a 'reformed' discipline despite the changes brewing in higher education, particularly the increasing critique levelled at the discipline in humanities departments and highlighting 'the politics of language and textuality' (see also Peim, 1993). Arguably, then, the contestations taking place regarding the subject were happening within the pedagogic field as opposed to a straightforward recontextualising process. Nonetheless, it is still, to my mind, useful to consider the nature of

the content used in the FSQ, and its 'route' from policy and origin of knowledge to pedagogic practice in relation to Bernstein's sociology. Seen through this prism, it seems the FSQ shares more in common with vocational qualifications, than with school English.

The type of content used in the FSQ is not "specialist intellectual knowledge" in any real sense; in other words, it was not generated in university departments and research institutes. Chen and Derewianka (2009) list some of the disciplines which contribute to language education: psychology, linguistics, sociology, and literary and media studies. While most of these areas of knowledge are relevant in the delivery and assessment of FSQ, policy documents appear to distance the qualification from alliance to any 'specialist' body of knowledge. Considering reading for instance, the FSQ content guidelines (DfE, 2018:13), stipulate that texts used should "include a range of straightforward texts". Though 'straightforward' is a rather cryptic term, it ties in with the aforementioned 'real-world situations' to portray a distinctly non-academic tone. Compare this to the English GCSE (DfE, 2013: 4) which demands that students "should read and be assessed on high-quality, challenging texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries". However, the English GCSE content doesn't fall entirely comfortably under the esoteric / vertical definition either: forms of specialised language in contrast with 'informal' open response serve as an example of blurred boundaries and ambiguities between the vertical and horizontal (Peim, 2009). Nonetheless, "The process of recontextualization, whereby knowledge acquired in HE is transformed into practical knowledge of the school curriculum, seals the formally sanctioned role" of the curriculum (ibid: 159).

Finally, the English FSQ differs from other literacy qualifications not only because of its restricted content, but also because of the social structure which eventually refashions external knowledge to 'pedagogised' knowledge. Much like the content, where what is striking are the absent elements (literature), in the structure it appears that what traditionally constitutes a major part of the field of production of knowledge (i.e. academia) is absent in favour of further education providers, employers and business and awarding organisations (DfE, 2017A). A useful example of this is the recent consultation on the content of the FSQ (DfE, 2018b). Its list of contributors shows that only nine contributions were made by Higher Education establishments, compared to 49 apprenticeship providers; 29 adult community learning settings; and fifteen from the employer / business sectors.

Jones and Moore (1993) used a Bernsteinean analysis to interrogate the particular manifestations of institutional control of knowledge in the context of vocational qualifications. They point out that where the 'primary discursive base' is rooted in daily social activities such as "the world of work", a 'powerful recontextualizing field or agency' (in the case of the FSQ, exam boards, Ofqual, the DfE) will step in to articulate these activities as 'formal skills training'. This is reminiscent of the kind of discursive base the FSQ has at its core. There is much in common between the vocational qualifications examined by Jones and Moore and the FSQ; in fact, the FSQ is commonly used to 'complement' the former. It is also, as Jones and Moore (1993: 386) suggest in relation to the NVQ, "atomistic and decomposes activities into supposed constituent elements ('skills') in terms of which the performance of individuals can be measured". Jones and Moore (1993: 395) also reflected on the way in which (as I have suggested vis-à-vis the FSQ) these vocational qualifications "deny any theoretical status… (and) present the view that 'skills' are transparent – simple, unproblematic representations of 'how things are'".

c. Models of curriculum design:

Much of the work teachers carry out in respect of the FSQ is curriculum design of some form; this could include the sourcing of texts, sequencing lessons, or devising assessments. Below, I outline some of the main approaches to curriculum design. Rather than attempting to cover the entirety of this literature, I follow Posner (1998) in presenting three dominant strands of thought: Technical Production; the Practical; the Critical.

Technical Production: since the publication of his *Basic Principles of Curriculum* (1949) Ralph Tyler has been considered to be a major influence on curricular planning (Burns, 2018), widely known as 'the Tyler Rationale' (Wraga, 2017). As Posner (1998) suggests, Tyler's work is understood to answer a 'procedural' question, i.e. what steps should a teacher take in planning a curriculum? Tyler stipulated four questions for teachers to ask in order to ascertain how to go about curricular planning. These include identifying clear purposes or outcomes of the educational enterprise at hand; what experiences can relate appropriately to this desired outcome? How best to organize these experiences? Are the purposes being achieved? It is important to shed light on some of the assumptions associated with this model, underpinning its designation as technical production. Firstly, schooling is taken to be a process that aims to promote learning. The learning of individuals is, in this context, the 'product' of schooling and

curricula. The planning of curriculum is seen as an objective, scientific enterprise governed by a 'means-ends reasoning'. This implies linearity between means and ends, and furthermore dictates a technical conceptualization of planning – where planning is a matter of finding best ways to achieve unproblematic outcomes; this is to be carried out by 'experts' in education and subject-matter. Posner (1998: 82) elucidates the qualities which exemplify the Technical Production perspective:

> they are *technical* if they consider educational decisions to be made objectively… by experts with specialised knowledge; they are *production orientated* if they view schooling as a process whose main purpose is to produce learning in which the logic of educational decision making is based on means-ends reasoning.

The Practical:

First published in 1969, Schwab's work *The Practical: a Language for Curriculum*, still informs curriculum debate today (Westbury, 2013; Connelly, 2013). Schwab does not reject the fundamentals of the technical production position which sees curriculum planning as the domain of those who hold expert knowledge; he accepts that schools 'function' to produce agreed knowledge within pupils. In some of his writing (Schwab, 1983) he refers to curricular content as a consequence of 'communal decision' taken by relevant parties (e.g. practising teachers); this can be seen as a passing gesture towards the 'legitimating' nature of educational work as seen earlier by critical thinkers, or perhaps more likely as an acceptance of school knowledge as a neutral reflection of societal dispositions. It is important also to acknowledge that Schwab's aversion to 'theory-driven curriculum development' implies a general rejection of ideology as a barrier to curriculum planners' ability to adequately reflect on the complexities of teaching and learning situations. Theory, for Schwab (2013: 592) is "ill-fitted and inappropriate to problems of actual teaching and learning". This means that his theory of curriculum adopts a non-ideological, neutral posture much like Tyler's work.

However, it is where Schwab diverges from the technical production tradition that is of interest in respect of the FSQ. His rejection of theory-driven curriculum planning is based on a triad of arguments, best summarised here as the aforementioned inadequacy in reflecting 'real-life' complexities; the abstract nature of theory and its tendency to silence 'the real thing' (Posner, 1998) - the concrete cases of study. Schwab is also weary of the doctrinaire nature of some (especially, political) theories; and lastly theories tend to fail in crossing over to parallel areas

of inquiry, as is required in teaching which amongst other areas involves study of personality, social structure, ethics and more (Schwab, 2013).

Schwab's response to these inadequacies takes the form of the Practical; an approach to curriculum design which puts at its heart a curricular *decision*, where the theoretical approach would place *knowledg*e as a desired outcome. While knowledge has a truth value which tends to be durable, the decision taken by a curricular worker "applies unequivocally only to the case for which it was sought" (Schwab, 2013: 593). Stripping the desired outcome of curriculum planning from its permanent, universal epistemological status implies a radically different method of striving towards it: a method which is essentially focussed on the particulars of a teaching situation and context.

The Critical:

Central to both approaches to curriculum design presented thus far, is the role of the curriculum planner in 'depositing' knowledge into pupils. This implies both the need for 'expert knowledge' on the part of the curriculum designer, and a relationship of dominance over her pupils. The critical approach takes issue with both. Much of the debate in previous sections centred on a critical point of view of education and knowledge; in this sub-section I wish to highlight some implications of this approach to the particular question of curricular design.

The 'depositing' metaphor originates in the work of Paulo Freire (1996) who described the dominant modes of education using the 'banking metaphor': here pupils are merely passively 'receiving, filling, storing the deposits'. Freire offered in response the notion of emancipatory approaches to curricular design; a process where 'critical reflection' was used to interrogate pupils' and teachers' place in the world. There was emphasis both on changing relations of domination within the educational context, and an outward-looking search for social justice in wider society. This is epitomized by the concept of 'praxis' – the actions which are the results of this critical reflection.

A critical approach to the FSQ curriculum design would start by abandoning the pretence of being ideologically value-free. The initial implication would most likely be an interrogation of the types of literacy presented as 'basic skills'. The aim of a critical pedagogy is ultimately emancipation; curriculum design, then, is not a technical matter, rather a political and moral one. The desired outcome is epistemological: to expose for pupils "their objective situation and

their awareness of that situation - the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which and with which they exist" (Freire, 1996: 95).

There are however elements of critical curricular design which could be adopted within broader, more conventional educational contexts: Freire advocated creating a 'dialogue' where curriculum design is cooperatively undertaken by pupils and teachers, by identifying *themes* which relate to the pupils' 'real' lives. These form the basis for conversational pedagogy which fosters critical reflection on one's own life. The themes in question are part of a complex picture of human life: they are the material manifestations of the "complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites, striving towards plenitude" (Friere, 1996: 96) which characterize an epoch. The inherent contradictions in these themes include the themes of liberation and domination which Freire wishes to explore and strip away their mythical façade. In the broadest terms, these generative themes are particles of human history, and using them as a tool for curricular design can, according to Freire, enable pupils to regain their place in history.

In the last analysis, I believe that Freire's version of curricular design is most aptly seen as a disposition. In teaching literacy, this disposition calls for "a narrative of hope, an ethic of struggle and a pedagogy of transformation" (Roberts, 1998: 105).

1. **d. The study of literature and 'unanswerable questions':** the question as to what are the implications of omitting literary content from a literacy qualification is one that informed this research from its inception. The potential of literary texts to enhance pupils' capacity to understand themselves and others has been highlighted by amongst others, Aase (2011) and Schwarz (2008), who both posit the study of literature as a cognitive activity which goes beyond the studied texts to the social realm. Educational policy highlights the capacity of literature education to assist pupils to "develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually" (DfE, 2014).

The philosophical implications of humanistic and artistic curricula, and a particular interest in the epistemological association of such curricula with social structures and the pursuit of emancipation, are central in the work of Maxine Greene, which spanned four decades. Greene (1971) advocated a mode of curricular design which strives to facilitate an 'interior journey': one that follows a path seeking both an understanding of one's presence in the world, and a wider quest for meaning. In constructing her argument, Greene (1971: 129) utilized

theorizations of literary criticism to equate the needs of readers to "break with the common-sense world he normally takes for granted" with what is required for meaningful learning. Her point is that this is a requisite for any meaningful learning, and is at odds with curriculum design which relies upon 'structures of prescribed knowledge'. The task of teachers and curricular designers then, is to "stimulate an awareness of the questionable… to beckon beyond the everyday." (Greene, 1971: 132)

In this regard, Greene saw the study of literature as having the utmost importance. One of the key challenges Greene responded to was the danger of younger generations slipping into a 'sense of meaningless' (Greene, 1965) which is the result of a perceived epistemological difficulty responding to moral questions. The epistemological project is to accept that the only 'real' universe is that described by the sciences, to further concede that "only factual and formal questions are actually answerable" in this framework, yet nonetheless to find a way to address these moral questions. It is here that Greene assigns a role for engagement with literary works. Uniquely, she argues, literary works are non-cognitive due to their intuitive nature and their inherent links to the unconscious. However, they do not lack cognitive content: in fact, "the aesthetic appeal of literature is largely due to the cognitive meanings conveyed by the language used" (Green, 1965: 3). For Greene, then, literature might provide 'cognitive meanings' without a pretense of 'truth' in the scientific sense. Put another way, the integrity of scientific enquiry can be maintained, but a cognitively meaningful search for moral answers can still be had.

Lastly, Greene (1965: 5) asserts her belief that reading literary works, and then reflecting on that reading in a curricular context, allows pupils to "discern new highlights and nuances of their own histories", ultimately enabling them to choose commitments. This point is by no means a trivial one in relation to my study since it links literacy instruction to SEN pupils with the ability to 'act upon the world', to acquire meaningful agency. And it is this returning to the moral questions which typifies Greene's literacy classroom. Literature might enable pupils to "choose the stand we must take, the gesture we can make, when we confront what cannot be resolved in factual terms" (Greene, 1965: 8). As Barone (1998) notes, Maxine Greene managed to bring imaginative literature "to bear on the central concerns of education".

1. e. English as a school subject:

Like the teachers participating in this research, I first taught the English FSQ to pupils with SEN, as an 'intervention', and subsequently to these pupils failing their English GCSE. Unlike

the participants of this research, I was a recently-qualified English teacher. As I began to familiarize myself with the qualification's specification, the tensions that to a great degree drive this research immediately surfaced: the absence of literary content was the first thing to stand out. Second, the generic nature of skills to be assessed, and consequently, the opportunity to impose my own ideas of what 'English' teaching and learning is by way of content into the set structure.

In order to ground the debate of the FSQ in its particular historical context, to explore its "socio-historical determinations" (Ball, 1982), it is useful to consider how it relates to the history of teaching English as a school subject. English as an academic discipline has its origins in the mid-nineteenth century when it began forging a place in higher education, then broadly responding to the emergence of 'England' as an imperial power (Goodwyn, 2010). Goodwyn and Ellis (in Leung and Street, 2014) both recognize that to begin with, 'English' was mainly concerned with literature and the composition of a national canon – in line with its genealogy of Greek and Latin studies which encompassed philology and their respective canonical texts. As far as school English is concerned, it was the Newbolt Report of 1921 which stipulated the necessity of English as a taught subject in the compulsory educational system. F.R. Leavis was instrumental at that time in the foundation of the Cambridge School (Marshall, 2000; Dixon, 1991), preoccupied with 'Great Literature' based on the belief that the study of these texts will foster moral development. Marshall (2000) emphasizes the link between this school of thought, the Newbolt Report and the legacy of Mathew Arnold (1865): the assumption that literature has 'civilizing powers'. The dual forces which shaped the inception of school English were a drive towards establishing an English literary canon and a departure from the classics.

Marshall (2000: 28) adds an end-note regarding Arnold's position and the Cambridge School which is relevant to this project. She asserts that they held a view of English that "places culture and the utilitarian in opposition. And… the utilitarian was to be found in the work-place and industry". This clearly marks a boundary between the kind of 'English' espoused in the 1920s and that which is emerging through the FSQ. Before moving on from Cambridge between the Wars, it might be useful to briefly refer to another scholar of that time and place, Ivor Richards (2014). As Dixon (1991: 12) points out, Richards differs from the later literary 'orthodoxy' of Leavis and stipulated that "we should study… the language of best-sellers, of the law courts, of advertising, of public affairs". This was a move towards 'Language' and away from the literary canon. However, drawing back the prism to the current FSQ, this move shares little

with the FSQ beyond breaking the monopoly of 'Great Literature'; the contextual interrogation of implicit 'patterns of thoughts, feelings and dispositions' is not a feature of the non-fiction pedagogy of the FSQ.

The next fundamental turn in the development of school 'English' is widely seen in relation to The London School, which predated the National Association of Teachers of English (NATE). It drew on the work of Vygotsky to conceptualize language as central to learning and cognitive development. Within this framework, pupils' 'personal growth' was fostered through spoken language, expressive writing and a recognition of 'local' (including working class) language and interests (Goodwyn, 2010). Ball (1982) refers to this movement as the emergence of a *socio-linguistic* paradigm and points to the influence of Halliday and Britton amongst others in the success of this shift, and in the consequent "swallowing up" of LATE within NATE. Andrews (2009) sees this 'personal growth' approach as the start of developments which continued until the time of his writing. In this account, the first phase, which continued up to the mid-80s, was typified by the dominance of personal 'voice'; from the 80s until the early 2000s, Andrews (2009) points to the increase in the official importance of spoken language and the rise of technology in the classroom; and thirdly, between the 1990s and his present day, the growing pressures of assessment demands. His is an account which presents that latter phase as tied in with a "US-based marketing/management culture". The tail-end of this phase coincides with the inception of the FSQ and the degree to which this framework is applicable to it should be investigated. Christie and Macken-Horarik (2011), present a similar genealogy of the school subject English, and in their account, latest developments include the adoption of strands from New Literacy Studies (Street, 1984) which draw attention to the "social contractedness of texts."

The late twentieth and early twenty-first century developments brought about an increased use of technology, increased government-led testing, the introduction in 1989 of the National Curriculum, and a number of government initiatives to remediate perceived 'crises' (Goodwyn, 2010). Another shift which is relevant to this study was the increasingly common use of the term 'literacy'. Goodwyn (2010) related this change to the emergence of literacy as a new interrogation of the social aspects of language, as in the work of Street (1984) and others. In parallel, the growth in "the emergence of literacy with a tagged noun", such as digital, or emotional literacy, expanded the meanings of literacy. The rise of technology also contributed to the loss of monopoly texts had over written language, and the rise of multimodality. Lastly,

though, it is important to recognise that 'literacy' also grew to denote a direct government intervention, "demanding that the literacy needs of the state should be paramount" (Goodwyn, 2010: 19). Certainly, FSQ documentation adopts such a vision of English / Literacy openly, declaring the intention to serve 'employers' (DfE, 2018a; 2018b). It is also interesting to note that FSQ documentation employs both the terms English and Literacy without setting out clearly what each stand for (e.g. ETF, 2015). For the purposes of this study, I generally refer to the FSQ curriculum and teaching as 'literacy'. This is because, as Goodwyn (2010) comments, the use of the term literacy is contested in the context of teachers of English in England; it has grown to designate a government-led, narrow concept of English. It is also apparent from the brief historical survey provided here, that 'English' as a school subject was steeped from its inception in a literary approach to curriculum; and at times when it diverged from the literary monopoly, it still established its identity in relation - or opposition - to literary conceptualizations.

The paradigms described above are still relevant to the teaching of English in English schools today. To a great extent, it is still the case that "English subdivides itself into, essentially, language and literature" (Goodwyn, 2010: 29). It is important to note, though, that the FSQ, while omitting literary content from its official requirements, does not, as does the English Language GCSE for example (DfE, 2013), move towards 'linguistics' (Goodwyn, 2010).

In a recent publication, Tarpey (2017) demonstrates that the old division between the 'elitist' literary canon approach to English and the 'personal growth' model advocated by Dixon still reverberates. While engagement with these debates is no doubt crucial for the future of school English, it is surprising how little scholarship can be found interrogating the implications of the English FSQ which decidedly refuses to fall under either of these paradigms.

2. Literacy frameworks:

In this study I wish to consider which types of literacy are privileged in teaching the English FSQ in the particular contexts examined. In order to conduct a meaningful investigation, I outline some of the conceptualizations of literacy in the academic literature.

2.a. New Literacy Studies and the Social Turn in Literacy

Over the past few decades, and in particular since the late 1970s, an increased emphasis on the social aspects of literacy has emerged in research. This has come to be known as the social turn

in literacy studies and associated with a broad movement referred to as New Literacy Studies, or NLS (Street, 2005; Lankshear, 1999). Probably the most important aspect of this approach in respect of literacy instruction is that, conceptually, the study of literacy involves "focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice" (Street, 2003: 77). It is important to note that, in the context of the FSQ as taught to pupils with SEN, this approach to understanding literacy is at odds with both the 'functional' accent of the qualification, and much of the dominant approaches to teaching literacy in a SEN context. In respect of the latter point, it is useful to mention Street's (2005) assertion that such an approach involves a move away from the individual, psychological study of reading in favour of an ethnographic approach. This is a salient point, because it relates to competing paradigms in thinking about SEN; the individual, psychological study of literacy corresponds to the similar conceptualizations of pupils designated SEN within the medical paradigm of disability, in both cases overlooking the socially-constructed nature of phenomena. A particular interest of this study is to unpick the social aspects and significance of literacy practices, materials and expectations as these play out in the FSQ classroom. A large part of this is to accept that what counts as legitimate literacy, indeed what counts as being literate, are not neutral objective propositions, but value-laden ones. As a research lens, the importance of NLS to this current study is that I aim to emulate the coupling of the practice of the ethnographer, "intent on thick descriptions" (Pahl, 2014; Geertz, 1993), with an analysis of the way ideologies are instrumental in conceptualizing and framing literacy.

As Street (2010) noted, what is now known as New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1991; Street, 1984) includes a range of research and practice writing that shares the above stance, and entails understanding literacy as plural and dynamic (Menna, 2016): it is shaped by the demands of context, use, and function (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Literacies are also 'contested in relations of power' (Street, 2003). Street (2010: 232) highlights the critical nature of this approach, noting that it employs "greater caution regarding assumptions about the intrinsic nature or consequences of the medium". Gee (2010) and Pahl (2014) both highlight the variety of disciplines from which NLS writing has emerged; and they both suggest that NLS writers converge on a few salient underpinnings. Firstly, as Street (2012) points out, what is 'new' in NLS is not the literacy itself (e.g. new forms of digital literacy); rather the conceptualisation of literacy as social practice and therefore suited to ethnographic approaches. Many of the 'first wave' of NLS writers engaged in debunking what they considered to be 'myths' surrounding

literacy (Street, 1984; Gee, 1991). They contested the dichotomous understanding of orality and literacy, and the consequent assertion that literacy in an 'autonomous' way (Street, 1984; 2003) entails progress and rationality, or that it is causally tied in with 'higher order thinking' (Gee, 2015). Ethnographic research in a variety of cultures (e.g. Street, 1985 focussed on Iran and draws on research on Brahmans in Banaras, 19th century Canada; Heath, 1983 on literacy practices in rural Carolina and more) was presented to demonstrate that literacy does not hold intrinsic value as a modernising force, or an inherent cognitive capacity; it is only within a social-cultural-political context that these effects can be understood. Street (1984) articulated this objection by introducing the competing 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy. The former describes literacy as having cognitive effects apart from the context in which it exists (Gee, 1991). The latter acknowledged the links between literacy and concepts of knowledge, identity and power – therefore recognising that what comes to be recognised as literacy is in itself ideologically laden.

NLS writers also took issue with any conceptualization which positioned literacy as an independent category distinct from the schooling in which it is taught and practiced. Though NLS recognises, indeed has a particular interest in, literacy that 'happens' out of school, it called into question previous research into literacy which didn't take account of the wider effects of schooling (e.g. Gee's (1991) critique of Vygotsky-Luria). NLS set out to highlight the inductive role schools play in respect of different genres of communication, interaction and their associated values.

Pahl (2014) highlights the importance of two terms coined by Street (1984). These terms, which drew on the work of Heath (1983), are 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' (Street, 2003; Tanner, 2017). A literacy event is an observable occasion in which written language, in a broad sense, plays a part in people's everyday interactions (Barton 2001), and these events will often "form patterned practices" (Pahl, 2014). Literacy in this sense is seen in its immediate, situated context, where language is used within a social frame of reference (Menna, 2016). 'Literacy practices' are "socio cultural practices that can be derived from observable literacy event" (Tanner, 2017). These terms have been subject to ongoing debate and refinement (Street, 2003; Barton & Ivanic, 1991; Baynham, 1995 and more). Fundamentally, though, literacy practices can be seen as a wider set of culturally informed ways of thinking about and 'doing' reading and writing (Street, 2003).

There is little literature available which links the NLS model with SEN teaching or research. Latham (2014) used the theoretical framework to investigate the construction of struggling readers' identities (though there is no clear delineation between this term and SEN). Compton-Lilly (2009) presented a case study of a struggling reader and offered ways of utilising the NLS framework for classroom practice, chiefly by acknowledging and exploiting the student's home-literacies and ethnic background. It is perhaps revealing, though, that in his call to link NLS to practice, Street (2005: 420) calls for the "practical application to mainstream education". The term 'mainstream' is not further explained, but in the UK context it is typically used to designate non-SEN. It is also the case that in his subsequent survey of publications, the complete absence of SEN from the contexts studied (e.g. adult education; widening participation programmes; LGBTQ students etc.) is evident. I believe there is a significant gap in the literature linking NLS and SEN pedagogy. Notwithstanding this, Brian Street (1997: 53) expressed some of the key concerns related to the literacy instruction of pupils with SEN as it unfolds in the English FSQ classroom, when he considered the implications of NLS on literacy education: he insists that literacy curricula "that reduce literacy to a few simple and mechanistic skills fail to do justice to the richness and complexity of actual literacy practices in people's lives." Street further states that rather than endorse a particular version of literacy, NLS advocates that teachers and pupils become 'ethnographers' considering the implications and meanings of literacies in their social contexts.

It is worth briefly mentioning the relationship between critical literacy and NLS, which are, as Pahl (2014) comments, adjacent, "but not entirely linked". Critical literacy, which will be briefly outlined later in this chapter, calls for an operationalized version of NLS; it calls for practice through social enquiry, but its a-priori political investment in challenging hegemonic practices marks a divergence from NLS. Where I believe the two schools of thought truly converge, is the way literacy is seen as essentially historical and socio-political. As Freebody et al. (2014: 419) put it:

> Historical accounts show us literacy education in the service of managing debts and credits; inculcating novices into sects and elites… providing a trained, trainable citizenry in times of rapid change; provoking, legitimizing, and channeling intergroup distrust; preparing citizens for willing engagement in autocracy, democracy and revolution – in short, in the service of control and liberation, knowledge and mystification, solidarity and discord.

In the last analysis, as Freebody et al. remind us, literacy in education is presented as a duality – a requirement and an entitlement; and at the heart of literacy education according to this view is the tension between "agency and governability".

2.b. The Four Roles / Resources Model

Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a model of interrogating literacy programmes which stems from the same core assumptions associated with NLS: that what we consider as being literate, or as 'satisfactory literacy performance', are historically and culturally determined. In particular, they would take issue with categorizing literacy expectations as in themselves 'functional' as does the FSQ. They describe the terrain in which these claims are made - the civil, socio-cultural, and job-credential demands - as 'shifting', in other words dependant on social contexts. Thus, just as the NLS approach objected to literacy in general being typified as a neutral, technical set of skills, so this approach rejects a finite, stable, objective notion of 'functionality' in respect of literacy capability. Freebody and Luke's response was to advocate a move away from questions about which methods allow adequate literacy, towards asking which literacies are offered, privileged or given priority in different literacy education programmes. In this respect, my research follows their approach.

The four roles model divides literacy instruction into discrete sets of practices, or 'repertoires' (Luke and Freebody, 1999) set out in four categories. What makes this model particularly useful, is that it both situates literacy firmly in a social context (for example, contesting that "access to different kinds of educational experiences becomes both a symptom and a cause of literacy performance", Luke and Freebody, 1999: 5) and holds fast to the practicalities of teaching literacy.

The **code breaker** is the ability to access the 'technologies' of written script; this includes what was traditionally labelled 'basic reading', such as knowledge of the alphabet and grapheme/phoneme correspondence. The **text participant** utilises 'background knowledge' of content and writing conventions in order to 'engage with meaning systems' – participating in understanding and composing texts. Freebody (1992) points out that this type of knowledge is independent of, and different from, the code-breaking knowledge; it requires specific cultural knowledge. The **text user** draws on social convention to grasp the immediate use and relevance of a given text to a social situation. It is about having the resources to learn what counts as adequate reading in different contexts: "Being a successful text-user entails developing and maintaining resources for participating in 'what this text is for, here and now'" (Freebody,

1992). The **text analyst** displays many of the characteristics of the *critical reader* (Cervetti et al., 2001); an understanding that all texts are 'crafted objects' (Luke and Freebody, 1990), and therefore located ideologically and historically – this allows for the rejection of textual 'knowledge' being displayed as neutral. The text analyst will have the resource to interrogate those 'unproblematic' and implicit assertions which texts make; equally, as Freebody (1992) and Freebody, Luke and Gilbert (1991) assert, the text analyst will be able to unpick the ways in which a given text "constructs a version of the reader". That is, presupposes the readers' (or pupils') ideological stance and disposition.

Several years after the introduction of the model, Luke and Freebody (1999) revisited it and updated its terminology; the four 'roles' were renamed 'resources' and seen as families of literacy practices. Luke and Freebody reasoned that the term 'role' was suspect since in contemporary sociology it implies that the abilities in question are "somehow the prepossession of the individual". In this study I will refer to both articulations, as I do feel there is a place to describe – and question – the participatory aspects of literacy instruction. In their 1999 revisiting of the model, there was also an elaboration of the 'dimensions' involved in mapping literacy capabilities. Luke and Freebody (1999) pointed to three such dimensions: the breadth of the repertoire of literacy practices; the degree of control over them; and the extent of "hybridity, novelty and redesign at work". It will be useful to consider these parameters as well as the 'families' of practices discussed above: Luke and Freebody (1999: 5) explicitly contend that "it is clear that an equal spread of literacy capabilities across all sections of our community is not achieved within current schooling arrangements". A social investigation into the literacy capabilities that the FSQ affords pupils will benefit from keeping these dimensions in mind. For instance, the breadth of repertoire dimension involves the range of textual genres brought to the literacy classroom and is an important curriculum consideration for teachers.

The four roles model utilises the 'skills' paradigm which is dominant in the current educational landscape, which further explicitly governs the FSQ, but refuses the 'neutrality' façade in favour of a socially-situated construction of literacy – instead designating them 'practices'. It seems reasonable to assume that what are designated 'functional skills' by the auxiliary documents of the FSQ will be described differently when drawing upon the four resources model; this study aims to locate them appropriately within this framework. A useful example of such an enterprise of 'translating' school-based curricular terminology into the four resources model typology is given by Luke et al. (2011) in their discussion of reading

comprehension. By positing comprehension as a fundamentally socially situated practice, they detail the discrete aspects of text comprehension and relate them to the four competency sets. Most importantly, perhaps, for the links to the classrooms and sessions discussed in this study, they define reading comprehension as a "lived and institutionally situated social, cultural, and intellectual practice that is much more than a semantic element of making meaning from text."

In respect of harnessing this approach to consider priorities when teaching pupils with SEN, there is still a significant gap in research, to which I hope this study might make a contribution. Compiling a broad review of literacy education in school, Freebody (2007) lists engaging with questions of how to support those with sensory, intellectual and specific literacy-related impairment as matters which "this review is *not* about". It is his contention that research into this particular enterprise, "lie(s) outside inquiries into the nature of literacy in general" (Freebody, 2007: 5). From the perspective of interrogating SEN, this position places pupils with SEN in a decidedly medical model of understanding SEN. This study wishes to adopt Freebody's position that literacy is socially-situated, but to complement that assertion with a socially-situated perspective on SEN. Woolley (2008) suggested using the four roles model to inform a new, broader, set of reading assessments which will acknowledge the social elements of reading. He overtly sets out his initiative as a remedy for "viewing reading problems as being solely within the learner." This debate is by no means concluded, as proponents of the 'simple view of reading and writing' responded – and still respond – by emphasising the need for teachers to assess those independent 'components' of reading and writing. (Westwood, 2009. See also Coyne and Harn, 2006; Hoover and Gough, 1990).

2.c. Functional Literacy

The English FSQ adopts in the most straightforward way an approach to literacy which correlates with its name: functional literacy. This seems an obvious observation to make: the functional literacy approach generally puts its case forward in official documentations as having a transparent, 'common sense' agenda which ties it to wider national-economic as well as personal development aims. In this section I will highlight the kinds of criticisms this approach provokes, namely accusations of collusion with neo-liberal economic interests (Giroux, 1988) and of erosion of democratic aspects of education. Finally, the functional literacy approach will be examined in light of Freire's (1996) concept of false generosity

(Lankshear, 2002) to put forward a theoretically-grounded account of the problematization of the FSQ this study carries out.

The recent report (DfE, 2017a) following a consultation of the FSQ content states the qualification's aims thus:

> Functional Skills qualifications should provide reliable evidence of a student's achievements against demanding content that is relevant to the workplace. They need to provide assessment of students' underpinning knowledge as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts. They also need to provide a foundation for progression into employment or further technical education and develop skills for everyday life. In some contexts, Functional Skills qualifications will also play a part in the Government's accountability systems.

Similarly, the body which governs qualifications in England, Ofqual (2015), set out the aims of the FSQ:

> There are some skills that are fundamental: to be successful in life and at work, people must be able to read and write and to use numbers with confidence. People need these skills for a functioning society and a healthy economy.

Finally, a discussion in the UK Parliament Public Accounts Committee (2009) again describes the way literacy is conceptualized as "the best approximation to what counts as functional competence for everyday living". Here - as is often the case with proponents of the functional literacy paradigm - the backdrop to policy discussion is a perceived 'literacy crisis' (Gee, 1999; Levin, 1998). Literacy is seen as 'neutral', technical skills (Street, 2005), and is presented as a benefit – a need – for both 'industry' and national economic development and for individuals who are presented as having a deficit: the Committee is looking to 'equip' these people with literacy.

It is important to acknowledge the obvious merits of such an approach. As Hyslop-Margison and Pinto (2007) point out, being 'functionally literate' is of benefit to students; it will enable them to read texts in the public domain, earn a living, purchase goods and services. It has also been recognised that a functional skills curriculum has the potential to address different aspects of social and educational challenge which SEN students might face (Wehman and Kregel, 2004), including transition into an independent adulthood, and preparation for employment.

However, as Hyslop-Margison and Pinto (2007: 196) also observed, educational programmes which are the result of 'back to basic' philosophy, and those responding to 'literacy crises', "advance a functional conception of literacy designed to prepare students for the labour market challenges consistent with neo-liberal economics". They argue that the functional literacy approach is in essence a socially reproductive one. There is also a slightly more nuanced aspect to their analysis: when interrogating the Ontario secondary English Curriculum, which employs strikingly similar language to that presented in the excerpts above, they comment that the pupils - those whom the curriculum wishes to enable to use language confidently, and to be able to communicate effectively at work – are positioned as using language passively. The implication for them is a "politically compliant" subject. The argument here goes beyond simply making a point about the politically value-laden nature of curriculum (e.g. see Apple, 2004b); it makes a statement about the way language might position citizens. The "receiving and comprehending ideas" in the Ontario document, and similarly the "demands of the work place" in the UK version, place pupils as future passive recipients with little agency to challenge or democratically participate in shaping the linguistic structures. Or as Hyslop-Margison and Pinto (2007: 197) put it: "the world is inevitably shaped by the ideas and actions of others". Socially, then, the functional literacy framework portrays a preordained social structure into which students strive to fit in with the literacy 'tools' they obtain in school. This point is important as it denies the possibility of students interrogating and resisting some of the implicit limitations placed upon them by this same schooling. As an obvious example, I would posit the statement by which the FSQ aims to enable pupils to progress into "further technical education" (DfE, 2017a). A critical reading of this statement would question the absence of higher education as an aspiration and aim for these pupils. It is, I believe, reasonable to see this example coupled with the passive nature of literacy presented here – implying an external source of authority – as a hint of associated limitations on social and economic possibilities. Readings like these show how, rather than being a way of understanding the world, literacy is in danger of becoming a form of domination and control over individuals and groups (McLaren and Lankshear, 1993).

Such a reading of functional literacy as presented above is conceptualized in opposition to critical literacy; the latter "provides students with a vehicle for existential and social transformation" (Hyslop-Margison and Pinto, 2007). Among the concepts developed by Freire (1996), who was in the forefront of critical literacy, is the idea of false generosity. False generosity is a term which designates all forms of "paternalistic giving, which while blunting

the pain of a situation or softening the effects of oppression actually serves to maintain the structures and procedures within which oppression and domination are practiced" (Maclear, 2016: 98). Freire was taking his aim at practices which might emanate from genuine compassion, but do not go any way towards changing the fundamental social realities which come to bear on pupils in respect of their disadvantage. In his writing Friere often referred to pupils, educators, and other social actors as 'oppressed' or 'oppressors' (Freire, 1996; 2005); I wish to take a cautious approach and avoid designating these positions in any simplistic way. That is, I do not necessarily assume that the pupils who are related to in this study are in a straightforward way 'oppressed'. I do believe though, that the participants in this study play a social role in their teaching: their work has socio-educational import in respect of their pupils' social standing, educational outcomes and life chances. To articulate the 'false generosity question' in relation to teaching the English FSQ to SEN pupils, the question is: does a functional literacy-based qualification serve to "buy peace" by way of paternalistic giving or 'altruistic' pedagogy, while maintaining the unequal nature of a given social structure? Specifically, are the literacy skills taught within this qualification addressing a perceived 'deficit' while entrenching pupils' social disadvantage?

There is clearly a strong case to answer in respect of two fundamental criticisms the functional literacy approach draws from critical literacy thinkers: namely that the goals of such a conceptualization of literacy are utilitarian and thus treat pupils as objects; and that fostering a literacy which is essentially tied in with work-place skill-sets acts to negate a sense of agency, in effect positioning society as a fixed structure and stripping away from literacy the capacity to critique, or imagine alternative social arrangements (Shor, 1992; Lankshear, 1993). The utilitarian agenda of the English FSQ as well as the 'domesticating' aspect of being inducted into a set social structure is presented openly throughout much of the accompanying documentation. A clear example is the Specification provided by exam boards. Pearson (2015), for instance, provides one such paragraph:

> Functional Skills English qualifications are designed to give learners the skills to operate confidently, effectively and independently in education, work and everyday life. They have been created in response to employers' perceptions that many learners are not achieving a sufficiently firm grounding in the basics.

This dual justification of the construction of the FSQ is evident elsewhere and clearly drove the initial implementation of the FSQ framework (QCA, 2007; the Leitch Report, 2006). The quotation above directly reflects the expectations placed upon pupils to be inducted into a set

social reality within which constraints they are expected to employ their literacy skills. Equally, the rationale for designing these qualifications is squarely presented as utilitarian; it is a response to employers' and industries' needs. Similarly, the body which set up the FSQ, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority, set out this rationale on the back of the Leitch Report (2006). The latter comments, for example, that "Skills matter fundamentally for the economic and social health of the UK", linking literacy within a functional paradigm with a utilitarian argument (and presenting a 'literacy crisis' as the backdrop for this). At their harshest, these criticisms posit the functional literacy paradigm as 'mean-spirited' (Lankshear, 1993) and as collusion with neo-liberal agendas of exploitation, as an enterprise fostered by elites vying to hold on to power (Giroux, 1983; Levine, 1986). Levine (1986) constructs this analysis historically, pointing to the origins of the term 'literacy functionality' in UNESCO-sponsored literacy programmes.

These criticisms appear alien to me when considering the commitment I believe the participants in this study hold to the well-being and future prospects of their pupils. There is a 'common sense' antidote to them which reminds us that pupils with SEND face genuine barriers to learning (Hurst, 2017); in this context it seems mean-spirited not to help them acquire what to their peers might be implicitly learnable, for example an understanding of acceptable registers of responses in job-application contexts, or the ability to decipher information in the public domain. It is also important to consider the fact that as pupils with SEN approach the later stages of their education, increased attention is given by pupils, their families and teachers to their progression into employment or further education. This trend is strengthened within the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) and therefore comprises an integral part of the annual review cycle for pupils with SEN from the point they enter Year 9.

At times, vocational, skills-based approaches to education are paired with SEN education: Kajganich (2011) describes this as the "marrying of vocational and special education", and while he discussed a particular educational context (Canadian vocational education), the picture he presents shows vocational education becoming conflated with special needs education, raising the question if this might be a particular form of marginalization by curriculum offer. Kajganich (2011) reports on a conversation with the Ontario Ministry of Education where an officer revealed that – not as official policy, but from experience – vocational training was broadly aimed at "lower functioning students". Interestingly, in a communication I had with the DfE (personal communication, January 2018), a Senior Policy

Advisor for post-16 basic skills qualifications commented in response to my question about the use of the qualification for pupils with SEN, that they have no formal information or statistics on the subject. However, they know from providers' accounts that the qualification is very useful in this context. As Kajganich (2011) comments, there is very limited research on this trend of coupling and conflating vocational and special needs education, and this is true in the case of the English education system as well. Atkins (2013) however, does reflect on this trend in England, identifying the "conflation of 'employability skills' with 'inclusion' in policy discourse". Consequently, and in the vein of the false generosity critique, she charges the employability approach to curriculum planning with inculcating already marginalized groups into "low-pay, low-skill work".

2.d Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy is often referred to in relation to the work of E.D Hirsch (1983); an educational enterprise where education is mobilized to ensure access of all pupils to a "national, public discourse community in which issues of grave collective importance are discussed" (Bizzell, 1999). Hirsch himself (1985) explained it as the 'background knowledge' that literate people hold in order to communicate effectively. Specifically, Hirsch drew attention to a body of knowledge which is implicitly referred to, and relied upon, in "serious talks, books, and articles". This approach to literacy education assumes the existence of an unproblematic 'national body of knowledge'. Being literate, then, according to this view, implies the ability to partake in the national conversation by becoming inducted into this body of knowledge. This idea ties in with Bourdieu's (2011) concept of cultural capital (for a discussion on the link between literacy and Bourdieu's work see Albright and Luke, 2010). According to Hirsch (1983), explicit instruction of cultural literacy amounts to an 'open invitation' to not-yet-fully-literate pupils to join the club of literate people. Seen in this way, the question of how to induct pupils with SEN takes on a particular colour: how to give them access to this background knowledge in light of their SEN?

The cultural literacy agenda is ostensibly a benevolent one; as Bennett (1994: 62) puts it:

> (there) are things we should want all our students to know. We should not hold some students to lesser goals, pushing them into educational backwaters while everyone else is advancing upstream.

Hirsch and others associated with the cultural literacy model (Bloom, 1987; Bennett, 1993) face criticism on several issues: Lefstein and Street (2007) commented on the ways cultural literacy constructs a nationalist identity; a debate around the national curriculum in the U.S (Hirsch, 1985; Apple, 1993); the level of prescription of a particular canon (House et al. 1991), the existence of a stable, unitary national discourse (Bizzell, 1990) and Hirsch's assertion that there is a literacy crisis (Apple, 2004a). Most widely, though, the cultural literacy model has come under criticism for its unquestioning acceptance of an ideological or class-based set of values and 'common knowledge' and therefore negates disadvantaged individuals' and communities' experiences.

Ultimately, a curriculum informed by the cultural literacy approach would share with a functional literacy equivalent the positioning of pupils as passive receivers of pre-constructed social structures and their literacy manifestations. The two differ radically in that the former is content-based, while the latter is skills-based. Both clearly come under attack from critical literacy quarters, and both are at odds with the social turn in literacy studies which emphasises literacy and what counts as being literate as situated socially. Considering the immediate context of this study, while the assertion of a literacy canon might be disputed, it is assumed in the English National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), and it is entirely absent from the English FSQ. The National Curriculum document demonstrates that there is an implicit acceptance of the key features of cultural literacy: it refers to "our rich and varied literary heritage" as an unproblematic body of texts, the familiarity with which is both a tool for self-improvement, and an educational expectation. The document goes on to list some of the necessary texts to be studied, amongst these the Romantic poets and "at least one play by Shakespeare".

A cultural literacy paradigm, then, in the context of pupils with SEN has significant implications: those who only access the FSQ are excluded from the 'national conversation'. More fundamentally, while proponents of such an approach argue that they offer an 'open invitation' by way of their canon, critics would say they are misunderstanding the canon. It is itself a means of exclusion: its content, methods of selection, modes of instruction and assessment technologies all play a role in producing their disadvantage. In the case of SEN pupils, it is arguably the case that such texts play a significant role in "differentiating pupil from pupil on the basis of a narrow definition of ability" (Barton, 1986:282). The cultural literacy paradigm was de facto endorsed by the Department for Education in England in their 2015 policy document *Reading: the next Steps* (DfE, 2015b); Hirsch is mentioned in relation to his assertion that 'background knowledge' is a pre-requisite to successful reading. The

document goes on to thus justify the principles and scope of the English National Curriculum, explaining that it provides pupils with the "core knowledge they need to be educated citizens".

3. Special Educational Needs

In this section I aim to signpost towards some of the key themes in the academic literature which shed light on the nature of SEN; that is, what do we mean when we talk about pupils with SEN? It then proceeds to consider the pedagogical, political, social and economic implications of current SEN policy in England in relation to the 2014 SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) which governs schools' responses to special needs (Norwich, 2017). As Koustourakis (2018) pointed out, there is a research gap "regarding the sociological approach to the school knowledge taught to students with special educational needs"; in this study, I aim to contribute to this area of research, applying it specifically to the field of literacy.

Firstly, it is important to set out the SEN context of this study: the teachers participating in the study are all 'SEN teachers' in the sense that their work is framed as a SEN intervention. That is, predominantly it is commissioned by schools to address challenges related to pupils' special educational needs above and in addition to what is available in school. The teachers are part of an external agency to the schools. The pupils whose literacy learning this study discusses, have all been designated as having SEN and are all pupils in mainstream schools, who are perceived as low-attainers by their school (and as Tomlinson (2012) notes, there is often a conflation of low attainment and SEN). The SEND Code of Practice stipulates four areas of need, and pupils referred to in this study are considered to have difficulties in all four areas: cognition and learning; communication and interaction; social emotional and mental health; and sensory needs. Pupils taught by the participants in this study do not necessarily have a disability as defined (DfE, 2015: 16) by the SEND CoP ("a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities"), and for this reason I use the term SEN as opposed to SEND which is the current catch-all legal term.

3.a. SEN Paradigms and disadvantage:

My research questions interrogating links between the FSQ and SEN pupils' life chances, require some consideration of the category of SEN, as well as addressing the competing paradigms at play in SEN practice and research.

The simplest and most directly relevant definition of special educational needs can be found in the SEN CoP (DfE, 2014: 15):

> A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age… has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age.

This somewhat circular definition does indeed cover all the pupils in this study: they are all on their respective schools' SEN register, and are mostly also in receipt of statutory funding by way of the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). There is much academic literature however which discusses and interrogates the ontological nature of SEN (Hodkinson, 2015).

Considered to be the 'origin' of research into what is now termed SEN (Skidmore, 1996), is the 'psycho-medical' paradigm. According to this model, special needs arise from deficits in the make-up (neurological or psychological) of the individual. Relying on the tradition of the medical disciplines, the approach is also known as the 'within-child' (Lindsay, 2003) model, as it places the 'problems' within the person herself. The implications of such an approach are clear: in order to help a pupil, there is a need for medical-style assessments, diagnosis, and ultimately 'cure'. In many cases, such a cure is not known so the pupil in question is deemed to have a constant pathology. As Shakespeare (2006) observed, this type of categorization of impairment was often historically associated with attitudes which present disability as divine punishment or moral failing. While competing paradigms are nowadays much more influential, and indeed within this paradigm the discourse has significantly changed (e.g. from the common usage of terms such as 'backward child': Skidmore, 1996), the paradigm still holds sway on much of the enterprise of SEN as it plays out today: the pupils involved in this study were assessed – often by para-medical professionals such as speech and language or occupational therapists; they are typically given a diagnosis; and they are 'prescribed' an 'intervention'. It is, in short, the case that pupils who enter the realm of SEN are subjected to what Goodley (2001) calls the 'psy-complex'.

The sociological paradigm of research, which is associated with the social model of disability (see Finkelstein, 1980), has its origins in the 1980s work of the Union of the

Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). This body of thought began to question the assumptions of the medical paradigm, which positioned disability as a personal tragedy. UPIAS argues that "although it may be a tragedy to have impairment, it is oppression that characterises the way our society is organised so that we are prevented from functioning" (Finkelstein, 2001). Though the relationship between disability and SEN is complex and contested (see Chappell and Goodley, 2001), the applications of the social model to the two do share a basic tenet by which they place the disabling aspect of differing categories (i.e. impairments) within society rather than the individual. The application to the field of SEN, pioneered by writers such as Tomlinson (2012) and Barton (1986), portrays special education as a "sorting mechanism contributing to the reproduction of existing social inequalities by syphoning off a proportion of the school population and assigning them to an alternative, lower-status educational track" (Skidmore, 1996: 37). Carrier (1984) made this same point drawing on a historical perspective, arguing that the 'rise of special education' was not a result of cognitive or neurological deficits, rather a result of the expansion of mass education. That is, while prior to mass education 'differentiation', or selection, took place before entering a schooling establishment, modern British education systems now required internal forms of segregation. Carrier makes a point of relating the study of special education to theories of reproduction, citing scholars such as Bourdieu and Althusser. Certainly, this type of analysis would demand interrogating the FSQ as taught to pupils with SEN as potentially falling under this definition, comfortably fitting into the notion that the legitimation of such differentiations within an education system rests on the 'sciences of medicine and educational psychology'.

In my IFS study I put forward an account of what I believe to be the main aspects of disadvantage associated with SEN in the context of English schooling and literacy instruction. The relevant section of that study is attached here as Appendix 1. I put forward three forms of disadvantage to consider. The first relates to pupils' particular forms of special needs, which often have direct impact on educational 'success' in respect of literacy. Examples include difficulties with literacy acquisition, understanding narrative, speaking and listening – which are all aspects of literacy which research demonstrates pose challenges to pupils with different SEN (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD, ASD). A second arena of potential disadvantage lies in the notion of 'life chances', or future prospects. Here I argue that oftentimes, and due to the aforementioned 'internal differentiation' within a school system, pupils with SEN, do not leave school equipped with the kind of literacy which will

allow them access to higher education. It seems indisputable that particular forms of literacy, including 'academic literacy' (Lea and Street, 2006) hold a position of privilege in our society (Gee, 2015; Hamilton, 2001), and so not being fully inducted into them would militate against older pupils as they move from school into their adult lives. Finally, categorisation itself brings with it two potential pitfalls for those pupils assigned the SEN label: being grouped in accordance with an 'abstract notion of deficit' (Shakespeare, 2008), and secondly, as discussed above, the categorisation as having SEN in the context of literacy, might bring about that 'lower status educational track', in this case the FSQ.

3.b. SEN and the Current Legislative Framework

September 2014 was a highly anticipated time in the world of SEN in England: pupils, parents and professionals were preparing for the introduction of the new Code of Practice. The new legislative framework promised to address the fact that pupils with SEN had life chances which were "disproportionately poor" (DfE, 2011) by creating a "radically different system". Teachers, school administrators, local authority officers and other SEN professionals had been working to prepare for a change in the ways special needs were assessed, addressed, and funded (see NASEN, 2014a); SEN professionals in the charity sector were anxiously waiting to see the impact on their collaboration with schools. The educational charity which is at the centre of this research significantly expanded its FSQ offer immediately after September 2014; and this section seeks to explore the links between some of the facets of the 2014 CoP and the English FSQ as it was delivered by our teaching team. I point towards three aspects which appear to reflect wider developments in the SEN arena: the increased emphasis on 'preparing for adulthood' (DfE, 2011); an increased emphasis on 'specialization' in the field of SEN and the tensions between inclusion and special needs education; and the push towards 'marketization' of SEN provision (Barton, 1998).

One of the changes which are set out in the 2014 Code is the emphasis on a "successful transition to adulthood" (DfE, 2015: 14). As mentioned earlier, the Green Paper which set out the new framework's overriding principles (DfE, 2011) made a clear link between this and the desire to ensure that most pupils, regardless of 'ability', end up in employment. Tutt and Williams (2015) see this as a reassurance for parents; Allan and Youdell (2017) follow Thompson (2013) in pointing towards the ways this particular language of 'high aspiration'

could be seen as masking attitudes of altruism, where the pupil with SEN needs to be 'rescued'. But however one perceives this move, there is clearly an unbreakable link between the school life of those identified as having SEN, and their future employment prospects. Those who are assigned an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will, from year 9 of their schooling, address their employment prospects and aspirations in every annual review meeting (DfE, 2011). This increased pressure on securing employment prospects stands in tension with the fact that, as Thomlinson (2012: 268) points out, these same pupils are often seen as "increasingly surplus in knowledge economies". Seen in this context, the introduction of the FSQ addresses this tension: it is a qualification which attests to being "relevant to the workplace" as its first aim (DfE, 2018a: 3), while adopting a decidedly functional approach to literacy which focuses on the training of workers for "occupational jobs that demand 'functional' reading and writing skills" (Giroux, 1988: 61). That is, the FSQ allows schools to demonstrate a commitment to the transition to adulthood agenda, while not having to tackle the potential disadvantages faced by some pupils with SEN vis-à-vis the complexities of the employment market: as Thomlinson (2012) comments, "even low-skilled jobs require qualifications".

Tomlinson (2010; 2012), writing before the implementation of the 2014 Code, but with knowledge of its 'discursive contours' (Liasidou, 2008), argued that SEN policy in capitalist countries reinforces a within-pupil, individual, and broadly medical approach to SEN: regardless of their placement (i.e. special or mainstream school), they are placed under the responsibility of "special educators, behavioural specialists, psychological, medical, therapeutic and other professionals and practitioners" (Tomlinson, 2012: 268). Her argument is set in the context of the debate around inclusion (see O'gorman and Drudy, 2010; Norwich and Koutsouris, 2017 for some of the complexities of this concept). Tomlinson argued that while there is a supposed tension between the agreed-upon agenda of inclusion and the way special education has proliferated, in practice the two are inter-connected; it is precisely the need to 'accommodate' increasing numbers of 'low attainers' within mainstream placements that requires an ever-expanding SEN industry (Tomlinson 1985; 2012; 2015). On two accounts this analysis might be seen as relevant when considering the use of the English FSQ for pupils with SEN: firstly, such an understanding of SEN as within-child, as an individual pathology, would encourage the kind of response where schools consider "the 'special student' as a policy problem requiring a technical solution" (Slee, 2001: 170). Seen this way, the FSQ is such a curricular-technical solution to the anxiety surrounding low achievement in GCSE (Tomlinson, 2012). Secondly,

Tomlinson points to an economical aspect to the expansion of the SEN industry, including the facets of parental (particularly middle-class) pressure and increasing economic and professional interests on the part of SEN practitioners.

It is beyond the scope of this study to fully expand on these themes, and here I aim to touch briefly on some of the conceptual aspects which could be seen as directly material to the specific area of practice discussed here. The idea that in capitalist, developed societies, inclusive discourse masks a discourse of 'individual deficit' (Liasidou, 2011) has been articulated also in respect of the 2014 Code: Allan and Youdell (2017: 78) use a conceptual framework borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari to critically engage the language and omissions in the Code, and conclude that children are "made to flow into specific categories"; that this is a 'form of subjectification' which reduces the pupil to data representations. Lehane (2017: 62) used critical discourse analysis to interrogate the Code, and similarly came to the conclusion that SEN is construed as a "given, a set of needs to be serviced" – and she sites Thomas (2013) as presenting these same concerns. Similarly, Phuong (2017: 47), referring to legislation in the USA, contends that "a medical model of disability is implicated in this legislation through psycholinguistic conceptualizations of language." It is important to note that this conceptualization of SEN is part of an epistemological legacy which stems both from what Foucault (1977) called the medical gaze, which posits a dichotomy of 'normalcy' and 'pathology' (see Liasidou, 2011), and the history of SEN. The latter, as set out by Tomlinson (2012) and Richardson and Powell (2011) was imbued by a perception of lower attainers as presenting a form of 'deviance'. With this conceptualization of SEN, it stands to reason that low attainment in English / literacy is seen as an individual deficit; that an 'intervention' is implemented as a response; and that this intervention will ultimately take the form of 'specialist' provision (in this case a separate curriculum delivered by SEN specialist teachers) within a mainstream school, but outside the general classroom.

The Code (DfE, 2015: 99) stipulates that "For higher levels of need, schools should have arrangements in place to draw on more specialised assessments from external agencies and professionals." This sets the tone for guidance which encourages "arms-length commissioning" (Lehane, 2017: 63), or as the Code presents it, 'collaboration', or 'joint commissioning'. In her study, Lehane (2017) points to the increased use of the terms 'commission', 'provide', and 'cost' in relation to the two former Codes of Practice. Her

conclusion is clear: “there is an emphasis on procurement and commissioning”. Allan and Youdell (2017: 79) also highlight the way that “the child’s special educational needs…are called up and made manifest through the debts and duties attributed to the various actors…” and Tomlinson (2012) points squarely to the expansion of the ‘SEN industry’ including as a response to parental demands. Apple (2006) amongst others has put forward a detailed account of the ways in which neoliberal and neoconservative educational reforms draw power from articulating their goals in “market-based” terms. His analysis appears to be well-suited to the Code’s statements about what is in effect ‘consumer choice’ and financial consideration when appraising educational work.

In very general terms, the Code invests in students and their families the right of a consumer to know the financial worth/cost of the provision allocated to them; to decide how to use it, and to evaluate it. All this is done using a decidedly market-oriented language: teachers are “re-worked as producers/providers” (Ball, 2005: 7), or as the Code itself (2014: 1.10) puts it: “Involving children…and parents in planning, commissioning and reviewing services”. The language throughout the sections dealing with parents’ involvement in SEN provision evokes a financial transaction: “joint commissioning” (6.60); “outside agencies” (6.58); “personalised funding” (DfE, 2011: 17.5).
All of this plainly demonstrates that the scene was set to deepen the role of ‘outside agencies’ such as the one featuring in this study.

As a closing comment to this section, I would like to reflect on the metaphor Tomlinson (2012: 269) employs: an “army of special professionals…for those who find difficulty in modern competitive education systems”. She describes a perpetuating cycle by which the increased pressures of ‘inclusion’ mean ever-expanding demand for this army and sets out amongst other explanations also an element of self-serving interests on the part of said army. If I were to extend this metaphor, the organization studied here is one of those armies; I am, in that respect, one of its officers. And while I recognise the problematic nature of much current SEN legislation and policy, it is true that I, together with the teachers (soldiers) I lead, genuinely believe we are fighting a just cause. To an extent, it is this tension that drove this study.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this study, I aim to gain a deep understanding of the way teachers of the English FSQ understand literacy and what it means to be literate, how this informed their textual choices, and how they conceptualised the relationship between their work and their pupils' life chances and socio-educational positioning. My hope is to contribute to a limited body of literature interrogating the application of a functional approach to literacy in SEN teaching, and to offer a rich, socially-situated account of a particular programme of study.

Methodological decisions taken by a researcher must be those best suited to respond to one's research questions (Hendry, 2009); methodology is broadly taken to mean "the frameworks for the conduct of projects" (Freebody, 2012). In this chapter, I discuss the choice of narrative enquiry as a tool of investigation and attempt to justify it with reference to epistemological assumptions, as well as situating the study within established academic traditions of researching curriculum, teachers' professional beliefs, and Special Educational Needs. I will further discuss my methodological decisions and present the procedures I have adopted, and finally present the ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

1. Conceptual framework: the research questions as I set them out, addressing participants' conceptualisations of their educational work, lend themselves to a qualitative approach to research design. The approach taken here should be seen as nestled within a constructivist-interpretivist philosophical paradigm. As Schwandt (1984: 221) commented, proponents of such an approach

> Share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation.

In simplest terms, this approach is at odds with scientism and positivism. Most important among the implications of such a position is the notion that "the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors" (Schwandt, 1984: 221). Thus, studying teachers' views about their educational work naturally invokes such a position. Particularly worthy of attention is the point made about the complex lived world, as this study continuously shifts between ways they understand – often tacitly – social phenomena such as SEN categorisation, pupil attainment, literacy and its instruction, and the contentious notion of 'life chances'.

In order to aptly respond to my socially-orientated research questions, a qualitative research design was adopted. As Freebody (2012) notes, this entails placing participants at the centre of the investigation and seeing educational work as 'mutual', or reciprocal between teacher and pupils. Importantly, qualitative research allows for a 'rich description' of phenomenon, the interpretative enquiry allowing a clear voice for participants (Creswell, 2003). Within these parameters, I chose to employ as my main analytic tool, narrative analysis, which as Cortazzi (2014) contends, "offers us a way to hear teachers' voices".

2. The 'narrative turn' in educational research:

In the 1990s, it began to be widely claimed that educational research had undergone a 'narrative revolution' (Lieblich et al., 1998; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990); this is now more commonly – and arguably in a more measured way – presented as the 'narrative turn' (Spector-Mersel, 2010; Goodson and Gill, 2011; Barkhuizen et al., 2013). The turn or revolution in question refers to the growing standing which narrative holds in educational research as a methodology uniquely positioned to provide researchers access to the complex issues they investigate. Moreover, it reflects the acceptability of the epistemological grounds on which such research is conducted, now considered to be sound within qualitative research designs. Barkhuizen et al. (2013) claim there is now a 'critical mass' of narrative research in the field of language teaching and learning, and position this trend within the wider expansion in qualitative research. Smith's (2007) discussion on the 'state' of narrative enquiry provides further evidence of the breadth of research undertaken with some form of narrative focus, and indeed the wide divergence now in existence within narrative-orientated scholarship. Barkhuizen (2013b) traces this growth in legitimacy of narrative approaches to the work of Labov (1997) in sociolinguistics, where both narrative as form, and narrative enquiry, as method, were discussed. As Riessman (1993) points out, Labov's approach to narrative enquiry is now but one amongst many others; she locates the narrative turn within the 'interpretative turn' in the social sciences and wider developments in European thought including the birth of narratology (Bal and Van Boheemen, 2009; Nunning, 2001). However, what seems to be generally accepted is the place narrative research and methodology take within qualitative paradigms and the rejection of the 'mechanical metaphor' (Riessman, 1993) originating from the natural sciences, where researchers provide objective descriptions of the world. In contrast, narrative enquiry takes the storied account as the object of research.

The work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990) is credited with coining the phrase 'narrative enquiry' (Clandinin et al., 2007), as well as offering a number of seminal texts detailing the potential risks and opportunities associated with such research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin and Connelly, 1996; Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Connelly and Clandinin acknowledge the 'long intellectual history' of narrative enquiry; they position themselves within an educational tradition stemming from the work of Dewey (1938), which supposes that "life is education" (Clandinin et al., 2007), and that experience is an essential element in understanding individuals, who must also be seen in a social context (Clandinin, 2006). In fact, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualise narrative enquiry as 'a way of understanding experience'. Cortazzi (2014) also notes Dewey's (1938) assertion that researchers might analyse their own narratives and so become 'scholars of their own consciousness', hence strengthening the case for the use of narrative in the search for tacit conceptualisations. A detailed account of the historical origins of narrative research appears in Andrews et al. (2013), its foundations presented as stemming from 'two parallel academic moves': the sociological-psychological anti-positivist movement as typified by the works of Polkinghorne (1995) and Bruner (1991) amongst others, and Russian structuralism and French poststructuralism.

Having established itself as a legitimate research paradigm, narrative enquiry is not immune to critiques. Clandinin and Connelly (1990: 245) themselves draw attention to two sources of criticism: technical rationalism and formalism. They contend that as there is "no quest for certainty" in narrative writing, it is the hermeneutic, or 'holistic ends' involved in such enquiry that essentially place it in opposition to "reductionistic ends of technical rationalist inquiry and the generalized and abstract ends of formalistic inquiry". Atkinson and Delamont (2006) express both their concern that the 'turn' has become a 'fashion', and wariness that such an approach might entail a lack of systematic analysis. Spector-Mersel (2010), wishes to move away from the emphasis on 'diversity as the hallmark' of narrative enquiry, and consolidate the paradigm's unique position within the interpretive paradigm. Freeman (in De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2019), acknowledges these same concerns and sets out to reply to them, by setting out a 'defense of narrative as a way of understanding'.

2.a. Typology of narrative research:

As Riessman (1993) notes, there are a number of typologies available presenting the different approaches to narrative research (see also Mishler, 1995). Narrative research has a tradition in several disciplines, including ethnography, sociolinguistics, psychology and literary studies, as

well as within medicine studies (Hurwitz et al., 2008). Below I attempt a concise, non-exhaustive, typology of narrative research approaches which are particularly prevalent and relevant to educational research.

Structural analysis is concerned with the form of a narrative, the 'how' it is told, or as Cortazzi (2014) puts it, the 'structural properties of narratives in relation to their social functions'. The key figure in this type of work is Labov (1972), who introduced the concept of recurring patterns in narratives: these patterns include abstract; orientation; complication; evaluation; result; and coda. Riessman (2008) claims such an approach is particularly useful in the context of small-scale studies, due to the great detail afforded to features of talk. Importantly, structural analysis problematizes the link between language and meaning; in other words, it doesn't assume 'transparency' of meaning (Riessman, 2008). As Holstein and Gubrium (2011) maintain, this approach was important in opening everyday discourse to extensive scrutiny and search for meaning. The variety of criticisms levelled at structural analysis is set out by Cortazzi (2014). It is useful for this study to mention that Labov's model discounts non-linear modes of 'progression' of narrative (e.g. flashbacks), as well as Bamberg's (2006) concern that the structural model gives absolute priority to a particular type of story, excluding 'small stories' which might not share the same scope.

Interactional analysis is concerned chiefly with the interaction between teller and researcher. Analysis might include paralinguistic features of conversations (Riessman, 2008). This type of analysis is particularly useful when the research interest is focused on the event of telling and the way participants in that process make sense of narratives at the time, and social context of that 'moment of telling' (Barkhuizen, 2013b). Georgakopoulou (2006) contends that this type of approach might be important in giving voice to 'non-canonical' stories.

Thematic analysis is concerned with 'what is told' as opposed to the telling (Riessman, 2008; Mishler, 1995). Riessman (2008) further claims that thematic analysis is usually tacitly underpinned by a philosophy of language where it is 'a direct and unambiguous route to meaning'. In thematic analysis, the researcher collates stories and groups them in accordance with categories of content.

Within narrative research in education, most research can further be divided according to two methodological strands: investigating narratives (analysis of narratives); and composing

narratives (narrative analysis) – where a narrative is the 'product' of research. These methodological strands have been anchored in epistemological grounds and relate to the work of cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991), and further refined by Polkinghorne (1995). The latter argues that these two strands correspond to two 'distinctive' types of cognition: paradigmatic, and narrative. Paradigmatic narrative classifies particular instances as belonging to a category or concept. Its 'primary function', is to highlight, and 'attend to' "the features or attributes that essentially define particular items as instances of a category" (Polkinghorne, 1995: 10). This type of cognition is, it is argued, the driver behind the analysis of narrative, where narrative 'items' are grouped and considered as part of wider categories and phenomenon. In narrative cognition, the disparate elements of human action are brought together with some 'expansionary power'. Carter (1993) emphasises the ability of narratives to evoke the 'richness and nuances' of human affairs, which are not 'captured' by definitions or abstract thought. Perhaps most pertinent to this study is Carter's (1993) observation that unlike paradigmatic cognition, narrative "can accommodate ambiguity and dilemma as central … theme". Polkinghorne (1995: 12) explains the different ways in which these two cognitive modes and corresponding methodologies play out: "analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories". In this study, I employ both modes of cognition and both corresponding methodologies, adopting a broadly thematic approach to analysis.

2.b Defining narrative:

As Barkhuizen (2013b) states, narrative is 'notoriously difficult' to define. There is no consensus over what constitutes a narrative, and any such a definition might well be informed by the discipline in which a particular researcher is operating (Cortazzi, 2014). It is my modest ambition here to set out the term narrative as I use it in this research. Toolan (2012) offers a starting point by stating the 'truism' that narratives always involve – at the very least – a tale, and a teller. There is a relationship inherent between the tale and the teller, and it is 'spatiotemporal'; there is a social aspect to narrative, where the teller is located differently from the tale itself in relation to a perceived audience (Barkhuizen, 2013b). Toolan (2012) further claims that narrative is distinguishable from non-narratives by way of presenting a 'non-random' sequence of events. These facets of sequence and shared subject appear to me to be particularly useful, and are echoed by Scholes' (1980: 205) contention that "narration is the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time".

Polkinghorne (1995) points out that in the context of narrative research, the term narrative takes on a different meaning from the typically held one in qualitative research, i.e. 'prosaic discourse' (which would incorporate most 'coherent' texts). This restricted meaning brings narrative closer to 'story'. Citing Connelly and Clandinin (1990), he presents a story as a 'particular type of discourse', where the elements are plotted into an 'organized whole'. The plot relationally positions events to give meaning. In this study, narrative is seen to have a teller and tale, the relationship between them is seen as socially important. The activities and thoughts of teachers are related to each other through the prisms of special needs education and literacy as social phenomena. Policy documents and correspondence with educational institutions are also studied and in the analysis chapter of this study I attempt to present a credible story of an educational endeavor: teaching the English FSQ to pupils identified as SEN. The narrators will be evident and clearly indicated. The tales will be the organized accounts; they are thematically and temporarily related.

Narrative in this study, however, does not necessarily entail literary interest, or 'fiction'. Polkinghorne (1995: 7) is clear that the use of narrative as designating 'falsehood or misrepresentation' is not his intention, despite there being such an association both in popular discourse and in qualitative research, where it is seen as an ideological representation of a culture's values. While the narratives brought in this account are not literary, nor are they 'fiction' in the common use of the word; they share with fictional texts the interest in the "complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts". Lauritzen and Jaeger (1997) echo the notion that 'life stories' can be both works of fiction and factual recounts of real-life events. What is always important to keep in mind is that factuality refers to the participants' point of view, not 'actual' reality. According to this point of view, fiction and the narrated real-life events also share a progression towards some kind of resolution; the items of a story are linked to form "transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation" (Polkinghorne's, 1995: 7).

In this study I adopt Polkinghorne's (1995: 7) definition of stories as "narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode". Treating the product of research as a narrative 'episode' suits my research well, as the area of interest to this research is clearly only one facet of the educational work which participants in the study undertake.

3. The case for narrative research in this study:

The decision to employ narrative research as the mode of investigation in this study is best explained by the growing acceptance of the use of such methodology in the study of teaching. Cortazzi (2014: 5), for example, proposes that "the analysis of teachers' narratives can be used as an innovative methodology to study such questions of teachers' culture, experience and beliefs". O'Grady et al. (2018) and Barkhuizen (2016) present examples of narrative approaches dealing with issues of power and knowledge, and teachers' identities respectively in the field of education. Cortazzi (2014) makes the argument for the use of narrative research in education in reference to three themes: reflection, teachers' knowledge, and teachers' voice. A second academic enterprise which fed into my methodological decision is the narrative inquiry into inclusion (Lawson et al., 2006).

Before discussing these elements, though, I wish to position my methodological approach as a point of resistance to dominant linguistic forms of educational policy. The document which sets out the criteria for the English Functional Skills curriculum defines reading as: "the independent decoding and understanding of written language and text in a purposeful context". I follow on from Apple's (2014; also, Gandin and Apple, 2003) concept of disarticulation and rearticulation: stripping key terms from their 'rich' original (and I would say contested) meanings and in their stead positioning 'thin' versions of the same terms. While Apple wrote about the broadest of terms such as democracy and justice, I contest that there is equally a question as to how - and indeed why - teachers and students are to accept terms such as reading - and by extension literacy - or purposeful in the manner they appear above. This is particularly true in light of a significant body of scholarship which problematizes these notions and sees literacy as a social practice steeped in political meaning (see Street, 1984). My methodological approach, then, will allow me to put forward a storied account of curriculum-as-lived with all the ambiguities this entails in opposition to the host of educational policy documents and 'speak' which currently prevail in the educational landscape. This use of narrative is well established, as evident in Andrew et al.'s (2013: 4) observation of the "tendency to treat narratives as a mode of resistance to existing structures of power". More specifically, as O'Grady et al. (2018) contend, narrative methods have the capacity to allow 'silenced narratives' a voice and thereby offer a counterpoint to 'taken-for-granted meta-narratives'. In the case of this study, such meta-narratives can be seen in the form of the functional paradigm

of literacy and the utilitarian argument as well as the 'narrative of pessimism' in respect of SEN (Kliewer et al., 2006).

Also worth recognising is that this study was driven, to an extent, by the recognition of the lack of literary content in the FSQ. As discussed earlier, the import of such textual context is on the one hand formally and widely recognised in educational policy, and on the other, silenced in the context of the FSQ. It seems an appropriate response, then, to offer a narrative-centred interrogation of the delivery of the FSQ. While I do not pretend to offer a literary text here, life accounts and literary fiction share significant tenets and these do come to the fore in this study: the complexity and ambiguity of human action and the sequencing of events in relation to perceived movement towards 'resolution'. These moral arguments in favour of a narrative account of educational work are further strengthened by Barone and Blumenfeld-Jones' (1998) assertion that narrative formation is tied in with the 'idea of another self'; the foundation of empathy.

3.a. Narrative analysis and curriculum research: as Elbaz and Elbaz (1981: 105) observed, the merits of treating curricula with 'literary tools' have been increasingly recognised by social researchers. Key arguments for such an approach include the assertion that "instrumental and technical language is inadequate to describe what is important in educational situations". Gudmundsdottir (1991) positions teachers as tellers of curriculum stories, as well as shorter stories which are used to 'illustrate larger ideas'. Narrative, then, is demonstrated to have both utility in examining curriculum, and a natural presence in curricula. Cortazzi (2014) sets out the importance of teachers' narratives in terms of reflection, teachers' knowledge, and 'voice'.

The concept of *reflection* has taken up much import in educational thought and teacher training in particular (Beauchamp, 2015). Not free from variance of interpretations (Cortazzi, 2014), it is beyond the scope of this study to present a significant account of reflection as an educational tool. But it is helpful to mention Schwab's (1983) use of the term as 'deliberation': the application of theory in action. Similarly, Schon (1987) introduced the concept of 'reflection on action' to designate knowledge which originates from experience. Cortazzi (2014) draws a link between these ideas and Dewey's notion of thinking as 'the reflective reconstruction of experience', and points out that this definition can describe narrative as well. The importance of reflection in respect of adopting a narrative approach to curricular research rests on the way narration is seen to offer teachers a route to learn from their experiences of practice.

Teachers' knowledge in the context of this study is a complex issue, as it ties together professional knowledge of special education, English as an academic discipline, and the specifics of the FSQ as an accredited framework. Cortazzi (2014: 10) argues that teachers' knowledge of classroom practice is essentially 'context-bound', and therefore narrative can express this knowledge where it "cannot be expressed in any other way". Due to the specificity of knowledge teachers accumulate, it is not 'readily articulated' (Cortazzi, 2014; Elbaz, 1981) and is therefore 'internalized in the person'. The use of narrative methodology, then, is here justified by the need to access what is not readily available to the researcher; or as Grumet (1987: 322) put it, knowledge of practice is "constituted by the stories about experience we usually keep to ourselves". Elbaz (1991) demonstrates the effectiveness of what she calls the 'theme' of story in investigating different aspects of teachers' curricular work by presenting a variety of research, which includes the areas of educational reform and experiences of new teachers. For her, narrative is essential to understand what teachers know; her position (Elbaz, 1991: 3) is an "epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by Story". Clandinin and Connelly (1988) hold a similar view, paying particular attention to the way teachers' knowledge is constituted by a 'dialectical' interplay of theory and practice; again, uniquely suited to narrative accounts of the ways teachers 'know their classroom'.

The notion of teachers' voice is of course closely related to teachers' knowledge; it would be impossible to understand what a teacher knows without their 'commentary' (Cortazzi, 2014). There is another purpose, however, to eliciting teachers' voice, and it is to promote teachers' agency over the educational work they carry out. As Goodson (1991) points out, this is particularly important when considering curricular changes and educational reform, for teachers are inevitably on the front line in implementing such processes. The opposing position is presented by Demulder and Rigsby (2003) as a risk to both teacher practice and educational research, where teaching and learning are seen as carried out by "technicians who implement decontextualized instruction". Their argument is important to this research: the effort to interrogate the relationship between the policy landscape of the FSQ and the educational practice as it takes place in socially specified contexts is at the heart of it. As Cortazzi (2014:5) points out, teachers don't simply 'deliver' a curriculum, they "define it and interpret it too". Cortazzi goes on to present Elbaz' (1991) position whereby story is a fitting tool to present teachers' voice by placing action in context as story does. The notion of presenting 'voice' appears apt also in respect of the interrogation of literacy practices, as I do in this study. Sperling and Appleman (2011: 73) put forward a survey of 'voice' as a construct which goes

beyond the scope of this study, though it is useful to consider the way they present the idea of voice as inherently tied both to literacy and the 'construction of the self'. The intention here, then, is to allow the interrogation of literacy practices within classroom settings by seeking teachers' voice and elicit the "reproduction of their social and cultural worlds, including their reproduction of the kinds of talk they experience at school" (ibid: 73).

3.b. Narrative analysis and the study of SEN and inclusion:

In what has become a seminal paper in the field of SEN and inclusion (Sharma and Sokal, 2016), Avramidis and Norwich (2002) advocate the adoption of "history, narrative or autobiography to examine teachers' attitudes" to issues of SEN and inclusion. As Lawson et al. (2006: 55) argue, this is a response to the dominance of "Likert-type inventories and/or (at least semi-) structured interviews and questionnaires which elicited responses in relation to pre-specified categories and concepts". Lawson et al. point to what they see as the main shortcoming of such approaches. They highlight the assumption of 'common understanding' of the categories and concepts of special needs and inclusion where these are in fact socially-situated, complex and contested. The specific import this takes on in the arena of SEN and inclusion is, however, worth considering. Lawson et al. (2006) contend that the established approaches as described above were born out of 'knowledge roots' in the disciplines of natural sciences, eugenics, psychometrics, psychology and medicine. In turn, these epistemological origins dictate "individualized, pathologizing and deficit-type analyses". I hope that utilising a narrative approach when engaging with participants in this study will free up a space to consider their work - and their pupils - not *only* in the context of SEN teaching, but also, for instance, as young people considering different types of textual artefacts, or as members of a cultural-religious community.

The heuristic nature of narrative accounts might also be seen to have a positive impact in uncovering latent approaches to SEN within the participant group. As Tomlinson (1988) asserts, "Special education reproduces and controls lower-status groups". It is important to allow for an open interrogation of the ways teachers themselves perceive, reproduce or reinforce the 'dominant/hegemonic conceptualizations' (Lawson et al., 2006) of SEN and inclusion. As I hope will be evident in my analysis chapter, the open, narrative-focussed conversations I held with participants exposed differing views on the nature of SEN, the social

positions such-designated pupils assume, and the "differential social and economic treatment" (Tomlinson, 1988) they risk facing.

4. Research design:

4.a. Background: the IFS study and methodological lessons: my IFS study examined the ways in which a small sample of SEN pupils conceptualised literacy and the FSQ English curriculum in particular. This study sets out to mirror these questions through the prism of their teachers. The IFS study was inherently limited because of its scope; however, when reflecting on it, I had a distinct feeling that some of its limitations were a result of its methodological structure. The procedural restrictions of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) – predominantly, the focus on emerging categories – meant that not much attention was given to heuristic features in participants' accounts. Riessman (2008: 53) remarks that one 'obvious' difference between grounded theory and narrative analysis is that the latter "keep a story "intact" by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases." It would have been useful, in the context of my IFS study, to consider what role literacy played in the participants' life story, for example; such investigation was limited by the category-focussed approach. The findings of my IFS study also sharpened my focus on the English FSQ as a phenomenon in itself (initially I was interrogating also the English GCSE, and the relationship between the two). This focus also played a part in my commitment to a narrative approach, as I was seeking out what was a small part of each participant's working life, but at the same time trying to create a picture of a phenomenon as a whole.

4.b. Educational context: the IFS study focussed on one small group of pupils who received their literacy instruction within the FSQ framework from teachers in the specialist teaching service. The present study expands its reach and aims to explore this particular strand of SEN teaching in its entirety within this teaching service. Being a professional doctorate, this is also a salient point in regarding its focus and aims: the research questions were driven by my professional practice, and in turn the analysis strives to offer professional – as well as academic and theoretical – insights and lessons for curricular practice (Latta and Wunder, 2012; Andersen, 1983) in my professional setting.

4.c. Recruitment process: the target participants for this study were a group of teachers within the teaching service who had taught the English FSQ at the time of the IFS research (2015-16). In all, there were eight such teachers, including two who had since left the teaching service. In effect, the sampling for this study can be seen as purposive (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007), and fitting the objective of understanding phenomenon rather than creating generalisations. I approached all eight teachers in person and asked if they would agree to take part in my research project (the ethical implications of my professional relationship with participants are considered below). Once I received their agreement (all participants did agree), I sent an information sheet (see Appendix 2) describing the research and what participation would involve. Subsequently, a consent form was sent to all participants and once these were signed and returned, I formally included each participant in my research design.

From the outset, I was mindful of the need to establish a collaborative relationship with participants in order to allow them a 'voice' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:4). I made a conscious effort to prepare participants for a process in which we would be jointly engaged in "story telling and restorying".

4.d. Data collection: The use of semi structured interviews is well-established in the field of narrative research (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Mishler, 1991), and they were the chief means of data collection in this study. It is important to note, though, that the processes of data collection and analysis were not in any simple way separated; the data collection and analysis were iterative, as draft 'restoried' accounts were given to participants for comments, which in turn informed further analysis in a co-construction process (Connelly and Clandinin, 1986).

Eight semi-structured interviews (Schmidt, 2004) were conducted, using an interview schedule (see Appendix 3) which was devised during the conceptualisation process of this study. The schedule was used loosely, keeping in mind the over-arching aim of 'activating narrative production' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The questions on the schedule were devised according to key themes in my research questions, such as literacy and SEN; life chances; curricular materials. I also included questions which were more directly aimed at the 'activation' of narrative, for example asking if the interviewee could think of 'instances' where a link between literacy and life chances was evident to them.

Before each interview, I asked the participants to share with me an example of a text they used successfully in the FSQ lessons, and this choice facilitated a conversation on textual choices and curricular priorities. In a couple of cases, participants wrote to me in advance to explain their choice, and I used this correspondence as data as well. The eight interviews each lasted

between forty minutes and an hour, and took place over a period of six months, beginning in August 2018.

The interviews were audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. I then proceeded to create a narrative account from each transcript ('restorying'; see below). Once these accounts were complete, I shared them with each interviewee, and requested their comments and thoughts. These exchanges took place via email and I used them as data as well. During the analysis, due to considerations of space as well as to avoid duplication, two data sets were omitted from the body of the text.

4.e. Data analysis:

As Andrews et al. (2013) note, there are 'no overall rules' to the conduct of narrative research. While this was in some respects a challenge, the lack of ready-made guidelines enabled me to use a combination of different approaches tailor-made for my particular research aims. Fundamentally, I took licence from a research attitude crystallised by Wertz et al. (2011: 225), where "narrative analysis eschews the methodological orthodoxy in favour of doing what is necessary in order to capture the lived experience of people". Perhaps the most significant challenge I faced was that, in a sense, the 'protagonist' of the story I wished to tell was not a person, but the Functional Skills Qualification itself; an elusive, multi-faceted protagonist. The 'story arc' (Bishop, 2012) of this research, then, runs from its inception in policy, through commissioned trials, consultations, curricular design and to the educational labour described in participants' accounts. It is a story which runs from parliamentary committee to the English classroom. The challenge was to collate these personal accounts (Creswell, 2003) of one particular – and limited – aspect of participants' working life, without neglecting the heuristic approach. In other words, while the approach adopted here is by no means life history in the full sense of the term, it would have been remiss if I didn't allow a reflection of aspects of teachers' working biography. Put another way, it was crucial to be particularly awake to the 'whole' in this study, which is not a well-established field of exploration (for example, like a teaching biography), but a particular learning scheme. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 7) noted, it is the sense of the whole "which needs to drive the writing (and reading) of narrative". Below I present the sequence of tools and activities which produced the analysis chapter. While I designed a tailor-made procedure to fit my own research needs, I broadly followed Creswell's (2003) scheme of analysis which includes retelling the individual story; identifying schemes and categories; 'situating' the story in place and context and providing temporal structure.

Appendix 6 provides an exemplar of the development of one such account, Marilyn's, from interview to narrative; including annotated notes on the interview transcript and my initial 'storied' account, as well as a section of our email correspondence.

a. The three-dimensional space approach:

In my analysis, I based much of my work on two approaches to narrative research, presented by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002): the three-dimensional space approach and the problem-solution narrative structure. The foundations of these two approaches lie in the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1990). In this conceptualisation, narrative is recognised as both phenomenon and method. Its use in educational research, allows "theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived" (in Clandinin et al., 2007: 22). It is important to note that while I use – and acknowledge – these frameworks as foundations for my methodology, I do not wholly adopt them as all-encompassing sets of procedures. Below I will spell out which elements of these frameworks I adopt, and also the ways in which I depart from them.

The three-dimensional space approach has at its focus educational activity as Dewey conceptualised it: as personal and social experience (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2003). Accordingly, the researcher analyses the raw data (in this case, interview transcripts) using three categories: interaction, continuity, and situation. *Interaction* consists of both personal and social experiences, and includes accounts of the participants' interactions with others. *Continuity* denotes the structuring of information in a temporal manner. Thus, the researcher will organise events – as well as thoughts and ideas – in a sequence which will make explicit their place in past, present, or future. *Situation* exposes the (sometimes latent) 'landscape' aspects of the investigated activity. This will include the physical environment and social context. It is also worth mentioning Clandinin et al.'s (2007) three 'commonplaces' which seem to correspond to similar concerns, or as they put it, dimensions of narrative which require "particular kinds of wakefulness". These commonplaces are *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place*. I used these as a guide in my reading and re-reading of data throughout my study, and routinely returned to examine emerging ideas in light of these parameters.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2003) propose a 'graphic organiser' in which the researcher can categorise elements of the data. As they comment, to complete all sections of the organiser,

including participants' thoughts in relation to events, the researcher must return to the participants to elicit these. This is in line with Connelly and Clandinin's (1990; 2000) approach which advocates a collaborative process between researcher and participants.

Once I had familiarised myself with each interview transcript, I used the graphic organiser template above to pull out the personal and social aspects of the account. In every case, this was the first step in the 'restorying' process, the goal of which is to present a storied account of the interview.

b. A story map, or narrative 'skeleton':

In order to compose a storied telling of the interview transcripts, I devised a 'story map' (Richmond, 2002: 5): this is a tool which "attempts to reduce the story to a set of elements that may reveal a particular case in a certain time or place." Working on the supposition that stories will share common elements, this tool should enable 'cross-case comparisons', and go some way towards ensuring trustworthiness of the data. The story map included professional teaching background; initial thoughts on the FSQ and consequent development in thinking; methods of sourcing textual materials; and ideas about the purpose of teaching literacy (see Appendix 4). It also included a category of 'small stories' which I added after reading the transcripts and realising that they contained valuable material. This story map was also the mechanism I used to organise the story temporally.

c. Participants' feedback on the narrative account:

Once I became very familiar with the transcripts, and had used both the three- dimensional graphic organiser and the story map, I was able to produce a storied account of each transcript. This phase would broadly fall under what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) termed narrative inquiry, and Polkinghorne (1995) presented as narrative analysis, where the product of the analysis is a narrative. In order to keep these narratives standard, and to stay within the allowed word limits, I endeavoured to keep each account at around a thousand words. The narrative was then shared with each participant. I requested their comments as to whether my account accurately reflected their recollection of the interview, and their thoughts as they wished to express them. In addition, in most cases, I posed a number of questions clarifying aspects of the transcript which seemed ambiguous to me, or where I needed further clarification. Where

significant, such correspondence is integrated in the final account, in the analysis chapter. This was important to make clear the social workings of the interviews and to acknowledge that interviews do not produce a "pure reflection of the self" (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997), rather reflect a social process. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 9) point out, this type of content calls into play the 'problem of multiple I's': the way researchers might be able to "portray the complexity of the ongoing stories being told and retold" (see also Wertz et al., 2011: 227). Connelly and Clandinin make the point that while 'living the narrative research', there should be one voice of researcher and research participant, when writing (and presenting) the narratives - in the 'telling of the research story'- the researcher's voice must be made clear.

d. Thematic analysis of narrative:

Once I felt that I had a reliable narrative account of the interviews, I began analysing these accounts as one would a narrative text, according to some of the pre-determined categories in this study. These were: understanding of literacy; SEN; and the four resources framework. During the analysis process, I added 'the cultural story' as a category for two of the transcripts, since this appeared to be a salient aspect of the narrative. The narrative accounts were analysed in line with qualitative methods (Silverman, 2006) focusing on thematic interrogation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Guest et al., 2011; Fereday and Muir-Cochraine, 2006), where ongoing coding is used to elicit emerging concepts or to "identify particulars as instances of general notions or concepts" (Polkinghorne, 1995). I broadly followed Reissman's (2008: 54) description of thematic narrative analysis, where the focus is on the 'what' is said, rather than how (i.e. I didn't have a linguistic or para-linguistic focus). Considered as a conventional method in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994), I read the texts and identified recurring motifs in relation to the pre-determined categories until these reached a point of 'saturation' (Gentles et al., 2015), where incidents no longer expose any new aspects to a category or property. As Reissman (2008: 74) asserts, unlike the practices in other qualitative designs – and most notably grounded theory – in narrative analysis, the researcher strives to 'keep the story intact', as opposed to 'fragmenting', or 'fracturing' the data. I keep to these guidelines and set out my thematic analysis in terms which maintain the general sequence of the account, and present the categorical exploration as 'stories' (e.g. the 'literacy story'). Furthermore, the thematic analysis I present is attuned "to time and place of narration and, by historicizing a narrative account, reject(s) the idea of generic explanations." That is, the analysis remains entirely 'case-centred'. To provide an example of the way in which keeping

a keen focus on the story as a whole played out, considering the way SEN was spoken about and conceptualised by participants, it became apparent that there was something of an 'organisational narrative' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996), which sees pupils designated as SEN being 'self-interested'. This realisation came about due to the combination of the 'cross-case comparison' (Richmond, 2002: 5) activity, and persistently holding on to the wider 'story' of the FSQ.

e. Pairing accounts and a problem-solution approach:

Having completed all these steps, I returned to reading the accounts and conceptualising them in the context of the 'story of the FSQ'. The combination of the narrative accounts and the thematic analysis threw up what I considered to be illuminating 'stories' in relation to both my research questions and the story of the FSQ. These choices are best understood in light of Andrews et al.'s (2013) claim that narrative approaches to research enable light to be cast on "different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning". Put another way, each of these stories presented a 'problematic': an "internally complex and contradictory" situation, "often held loosely together" (Casey, 1995: 216). For example, in the accounts and the subsequent thematic analysis of Sam and Liam's interviews, the contradictory approaches they each took to disadvantage stood out. What I perceived to be small 'chapters' within the narrative were best understood, to my mind, in terms of the problem-solution structure (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). That is, I could present a recognisable narrative structure to include: characters; setting; problem; actions and resolution. At that point of my analytical work, I felt there was no need for further procedures (e.g. another graphic organiser); rather, I used this approach as a general orientation. I must also acknowledge that my work departs from the conceptualization of this approach as it appears in the literature. Firstly, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) present both approaches (the three-dimensional and problem-solution) as belonging to the 'holistic-content' procedure. This approach typically involves using the narration of a 'complete life' to focus on its content (Lieblich et al., 1998). The interviews I conducted are not 'life stories', despite the participants sharing stories from their professional history.

The teachers' accounts do not present, as is the case in other such literature (e.g. Rytivaara and Frelin, 2017; Chen and Dong, 2020; Scherff, 2008) a 'complete' story with a real sense of ending. The accounts are, rather, a snapshot of a curricular moment: the teaching work

continues, and it would be misleading to present these accounts as coming to a narrative closure. In this context, the strategy of pairing creates a 'narrative momentum': the movement from the identification of an inherent tension within the teaching context, its juxtaposition with a relevant peer's experience, and finally by way of resolution: a curricular response. It is the case then, that the storied accounts of teachers' experiences are based on the acceptance of narrative as a type of cognition, rather than necessarily being a complete and final story.

An important consideration in pairing the accounts, was their socio-educational context. Each pair of teachers worked within the same school and roughly the same teaching arrangements. This provided both a valid point of comparison, and a compatible framework for generating a socially informed picture of the teaching described here. A useful example of this, is the fact that Orna and Gina both worked within the ultra-orthodox community and the direct comparison of their accounts afforded me the possibility of concentrating on the particulars of that setting. Equally, it appeared to me that it could have been misleading to pair these accounts with those of teaching in a 'mainstream' Jewish school: this would likely mean either neglecting important social factors at play, or overstating them out of a need to attend to the obvious disparity between settings.

This last phase of analysis accentuated what might be seen as a key limitation of the study, namely that I as the researcher shaped the resulting analysis by selection processes: both in the choice of the accounts selected, and in deciding which 'chapters' were important for the story as a whole. It is perhaps worthwhile considering here Cribb and Gewritz' (2009) comment that the sociology of education "might be seen as a cousin of literature as well as a cousin of natural sciences". That is, the researcher has both a right and a responsibility to make decisions in relation to one's prose. By exposing the latent workings of selection and ordering as I do here, I hope to enable a degree of 'transferability' (Loh, 2013) while acknowledging the 'literary' elements of my work here. To slightly expand on this point: while there are no literary ambitions to this project, the principle of selection is undoubtedly recognisable as a literary device. It is, in fact, something of a cliché, which is expressed in what has become known as Chekhov's gun: the principle that the content of a text will include only details relevant to the story as it unfolds (Delaney, 1990). To bring this point closer home to social science, it is worth considering Hendry's (2009) claim that all research can be seen as narrative. Upon these epistemological foundations, Hendry argues, "all scholars can possibly do is generate situated knowledge."

I believe the procedures I adopted allow a level of transparency and consistency of the analytic process, and that in the main the approaches as applied in my study contribute to the understanding of teachers' experiences and interactions (the three-dimensional approach); and their responses to perceived challenges (in the problem-solution approach).

5. <u>Textual analysis:</u>

In order to put forward an account of the FSQ as 'protagonist', I turned to a small number of policy documents, as well as correspondence with officials in the DfE and relevant exam boards and text-book publishers. These avenues of investigation were part of my attempt to uncover and articulate the ideological roots of the FSQ qualification. The questions I was aiming to answer were: what assumptions or world-views are expressed by these documents in relation to the key issues discussed here, such as SEN, and literacy? What is the relationship between these assumptions and the socio-educational situations studied here, namely the teaching of the English FSQ to SEN pupils?

The work I present here is not that of a trained linguist; in order to seek legitimation of the way I went about this, I here wish to declare the orientation and the broad methodological frameworks which guided me. As I have stated in the introduction and literature review of this paper, I embarked upon this project with a critical perspective and believing that education, and SEN education in particular, are issues of social justice; not simply 'pedagogy' in any simplistic way. Thus, when approaching policy documents, it was important that I posit questions with a political slant, and strive to uncover the relationships "between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes" (Fairclough, 2013: 93). For this purpose, it has been acknowledged that using an 'orientation' (Hyatt, 2013: 387) utilising the tools of critical discourse analysis is valuable because it enables the researcher to shed light on the way authors of texts "represent and construct the social world, institutions, identities, relationships and how these are shaped and characterised ideologically through relations of power."

I did not adopt critical discourse analysis as a methodology or protocol for analysis. Rather, I was awake to some of the key concerns it highlights. Firstly, it is recognised as "explicitly political" (Luke, 2012) in its search for the ideological workings of texts. Secondly, I recognise

that beyond the policy as text, policy can be seen as discourse (Ball, 1993) and as manifestations of institutional power (see also Liasidou, 2008). The salient point here is that such documents – and attitudes as reflected in correspondences with key bureaucrats – "exercise power through a *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge', as discourses" (Ball, 1993: 14). When analysing policy (as discourse *and* text), I was alert to the ways in which it attempted to construct particular versions of social life. This was true when considering the terms 'functional' and 'everyday', for instance. Questions of how special educational needs and disability are perceived are clearly also value-laden, and Ball's (1993) argument would locate the implicit characterisations made by policy documents (for example the suitability of a 'labelling' system) in terms of the Foucauldian 'regimes of truth'. This point was particularly important in my approach to textual analysis: it was the 'neutralised' conventions (Hyatt, 2013) I was particularly interested in uncovering. These are the linguistic representations of social control (Fairclough, 2001b); the creation of an inevitable 'common sense' (Hyatt, 2013; see also Apple, 2004b). It might be useful to highlight a particular example: in this study, I often questioned the key terms presented in what Hyatt (2013) called the 'warrant', or reasonable grounds a policy document puts forward to justify itself. I wondered, for instance, what was meant by English for the "workplace and in other real life situations" (DfE, 2018c). This is perhaps an example where a policy document puts in place 'discursive contours' (Liasidou, 2008): these terms are treated as 'common sense', undisputed, and neutral. My paying analytical attention to these silenced elements of policy constitutes my claim to a critical discourse analysis orientation.

Such an approach has been used fruitfully to interrogate relevant SEN-related documents, the SEN Codes of Practice (Lehane, 2017) as well as the way "children with SEN (are) constructed and positioned" (Liasidou, 2008). It has also been advocated in the context of literacy education as a tool to expose ways "specific grammatical structures and word choices… manipulate the reader" (Luke, 2012), and has shown how 'language ideologies' can create educational realities.

6. Credibility and quality issues:

There are well-documented challenges in establishing reliability in qualitative research (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). In favour of transparency, I will first state that this study does not attempt to make generalisations, but rather to shed light on conceptualisations of literacy study within a particular educational setting. The 'unit of analysis' (Kahn, 2016) was understandings of literacy and the FSQ English curriculum amongst a small group of SEN teachers. Beyond the generic issues related to narrative research which are detailed below, it is worthwhile outlining the contextual boundaries beyond which generalising the findings of this study would be questionable. These are the socio-educational world of Jewish faith schools; literacy here taught in the context of 'SEN provision'; participants' professional positioning in the third sector.

Lieblich et al. (1998: 171) contend that the 'old' criteria of reliability, validity, objectivity and replicability are "impossible to maintain" in the context of narrative research. This argument is essentially epistemological, claiming that the use of narrative research suggests an epistemological position in which research materials "can be read, understood, and analysed in extremely diverse ways". According to this account, possible alternative accounts don't necessarily indicate "inadequate scholarship", hence undermining the traditional notion of reliability (the stability of findings over time (Bailey, 1996)). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) echo this sentiment, suggesting that the 'language' of other forms of research is likely not to suit narrative inquiry.

It is also true that in recent studies, questions surrounding the criteria of quality in respect of narrative research are still very much contested (see Loh, 2013; Chaudhary, 2015). With this being the case, there is a degree of self-determination on the part of the researcher, who "must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his…work" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Below I trace the key quality markers I adopted for my study.

Trustworthiness: this has been widely recognised in qualitative research to be the viable criterion where in quantitative research "validity," "reliability," "generalizability," and "objectivity" might be adopted (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Chaudhary, 2015), although validation in itself remains a key indicator for quality of studies. Lieblich et al. (1998) endorse Mishler's (1990: 420) standpoint that seeking "objective, non-reactive and neutral" truth-value is not a fruitful direction when contemplating narrative research. What is suggested instead is the criterion of trustworthiness. Lieblich et al. propose achieving this by means of "consensual validation": a process whereby the researcher shares research ideas and conclusions with

relevant, informed members of a research / professional community. This advice has been followed – mainly by means of ongoing conversations with participants and my professional colleagues (what Loh, 2013, calls 'peer validation'). The wider point of validity is supported by the researcher making the research process visible, as I do above in the methodology chapter. This includes making explicit the mechanisms by which data becomes findings and interpretation (Mishler, 1990).

In scrutinising the quality of my work, I also drew upon two of Lieblich et al.'s (1998) 'internal' criteria for quality of narrative research:

Width is the comprehensiveness of evidence allowing the reader to judge the weight of evidence and the appropriateness of its interpretations. An important element of this approach is the provision of 'lengthy quotations' to substantiate the account. I adhered to this dictate both in the form of quotes integrated into the general prose of the narrative accounts, and used as sub-titles, in what Creswell (2003) called 'in vivo' terms.

Coherence connotes the creation of a complete and meaningful picture, where the parts fit together internally vis-à-vis the purposes of the given research project, and cohere with wider research enterprises in the academic literature. As mentioned earlier, the former point in particular was a challenge, due to the nature of the phenomenon investigated. I hope that reading the analysis chapter will provide the reader with what feels like a coherent account of the FSQ as it is taught in a particular socio-educational context, and that this account will maintain narrative integrity.

Finally, **Verisimilitude** is the quality of life-likeness, or what can grant a study its 'believability' (Loh, 2013). It is an important lens through which to evaluate the quality of narrative inquiry, as it enables the reader to better understand what a subjective world-view of participants is.

7. Ethical considerations:

This research was approved by King's Research Ethics Panel (ref. LRS-17/18-5219). Elliot (2005) usefully refers to 'ethics' and 'politics', the former in respect of the relationships between researcher and participants, while the latter indicates societal implications of the research. The ethical considerations in respect of my relationship with participants were considered from the earliest stages of research design. There were three points to consider: confidentiality, the research 'experience' (Elliot, 2005) and what might be seen as potential 'relations of power' (Brooks et al., 2014) influencing the research.

The decision to work towards keeping anonymity of the participants was taken a-priori due to the links between this work and my IFS study, where participants were deemed 'high risk' subjects. It was imperative not to jeopardise their anonymity by disclosing the particular locations. I gave pseudonyms to all participants, and do not disclose the names of schools in which the work in question took place. It must be acknowledged, though, that a well-informed reader within the professional context discussed here might well recognise some of the settings, though probably not individual participants, or their respective pupils. The risk of participants reading what they consider 'unflattering, untrue', or revealing 'secrets' (Sikes, 2010) in my research when it is completed, was managed by the process advocated by narrative research, namely by checking with participants if they were satisfied with my accounts of their interviews.

As Elliot (2005) points out, the prominent reason participants might find an interview experience positive is a conviction that the research project in which they are taking part is valuable. This has elsewhere been termed the utilitarian layer (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009): a framework for considering the benefits one's research might hold for participants and relevant institutions. As part of my recruitment process, I presented the case for conducting the research, and I held conversations – both directly before or after interviews and other 'corridor conversations' – with participants sharing ideas about the importance of investigating the way we teach literacy in our teaching service. I am confident that the sense of importance I have about this subject is shared by the participants. As the topic of interviews was placed firmly in a professional context, and contained within a particular curricular area, I did not feel there was a significant risk of 'opening a Pandora's box' (Lieblich, 1996) of emotional risk.

My professional position in relation to participants was the most obvious ethical concern. When I conducted the interviews, I was their direct line-manager, apart from the two who had left the

service by then. In the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2017), there is no direct guidance for such a scenario. What is referred to is the general phenomenon of unequal relations of power: researchers often "study the relatively powerless" (BSA, 2017: 5), reflecting on a disparity of power and status between researcher and participants. The Statement advocates creating a relationship of 'trust and integrity' to mitigate such disparity. Brooks et al. (2014) acknowledge the difficulty of being an 'insider-outsider' as I was: being part of the institution, but at the same time researching in the capacity of a doctoral student. I followed their guidance: the key was to be 'ethically reflexive', and remember that ethics is an ongoing process. That is, ethical consideration must not end once ethical clearance is given by a committee. In all communications with participants about my research, I always used my King's College London email account – to create a visible distance between this undertaking and my daily professional role. I also emphasised in each conversation with participants that "I am talking as researcher now; not as a manager". As instructed by the Research Panel, explicit mention was made of the fact that non-participation would not adversely affect potential participants; I followed this line by continuously reminding participants that no professional judgement would be made about their work following this research. Perhaps most importantly, I embarked upon this project knowing that my relationships with teachers on the team have always been open, respectful and positive. If anything, it is my impression that taking part in the research cemented this further. All those I approached agreed to take part in my research.

With regards to the 'political' consideration, I believe that this research is justified by what seems to me, from a professional point of view, an obvious lack of clarity around the issues of literacy curricula taught to the SEN pupils taught by our service. As I suggested throughout this study, there are significant issues of social justice and equity at hand, as well as opportunities to engage critically with subject matter which underlines much of our work, namely conceptualisations of SEN; literacy; and the impact of our work on pupils' life chances. Participants still speak to me about the research and questions it raised about their practice; this seems to me to serve as an ethical justification for the project in terms both of benefits to the participants, and as confirmation that narrative research requires attention to ethical considerations "long after leaving the field and composing final research texts" (Clandinin and Caine, 2008).

8. Limitations of this study:

The limitations in respect of 'traditional' modes of reliability associated with qualitative research (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982), and narrative research in particular (Lieblich et al., 1998) have been discussed above. Here I wish to relate to other limitations concerning this study.

The first point relates to the focus of the study: being a professional doctorate, the entire study group consists of teachers in a unique teaching context. Beyond the questions about generalisations discussed above, it is questionable to what extent the particular case can be indicative of similar teaching in other contexts. The second point, though perhaps a little trivial, is also worth mentioning: while writing these words, I am continuously cognisant of the word limit imposed upon this project. It must be acknowledged that in all aspects - and chapters – of this study, this was a restrictive factor. The study might have benefitted, for example, from further scope to both elaborate on data collection and present more detailed narrative accounts. As I mentioned earlier, I decided to frame each presented narrative within a thousand-word limit, which was fundamentally a procedural decision.

A further limitation is related to the epistemological positioning of narrative. As stated throughout this paper, narrative research rests on the assumption that the self as expressed in narrative, and narrative itself, are socially-situated, and are always "construed in relation to another" (Bakhtin, 1986). It is also, as Wertz et al. (2011) point out, laden with potentialities for the future; "unfinished". These aspects of narrative are appealing because they offer a dynamic, socially-sensitive mechanism of interrogation. They also, however, posit a real limitation on the researcher: the necessary acknowledgement that due to changes in social circumstance, interpretations of the data may need alteration. In other words, the researcher "cannot claim any finality as to what a story means" (Wertz et al.: 227). For my part, I endeavoured to clearly position my research in place and time and to highlight the specificity of my findings to them.

Finally, I would like to point towards a body of literature within the narrative research arena which did not find any significant expression in this research. In what has come to be known as 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2006a; Bamberg, 2006a; Spector-Mersel, 2010), a number of researchers turn their attention away from the 'canonical' forms of narrative (e.g. the Labovian model; Labov, 1997), towards 'a-typical stories' (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 2). These consist of situated, functional, smaller 'units' of discourse. Examples of such

small stories are "breaking news, projections, and references (to stories of shared events)". The relationship between 'big' and 'small' within narrative research is not settled (Bamberg, 2006b), and the complexities of the debate are beyond the scope or interest of this current paper. Here, two points are usefully made: firstly, the adoption of a 'small story' approach would mean using different sets of data; 'situated', spontaneous speech as opposed to pre-organised, semi-structured interviews. The second point relates to the focus of such investigations: Georgakopolou (2007) argues that reliance by narrative researchers on interviews as the principal means of data collection inevitably generates 'classic narration'. This is seen as the 'proto-typical' stories of "personal, past experience of non-shared events". The advantages of such an approach include the potential to "engender specific social moments and integrally connect with what gets done on particular occasions and in particular settings" (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 5). It would be disingenuous to maintain that such an approach could not have been worth considering in the current research. There are two chief reasons I opted to stick with 'canonical' models of narrative (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). The first relates to the aforementioned scarcity of space. Within these limitations, it seemed wise to abide by the simpler, more straight-forward frameworks which presented themselves. Secondly, reading the 'small story' literature, it is striking that of great importance was the interrogation of *identity* as a key aspect of stories (Bamberg, 2006a). My focus was decidedly located elsewhere, in the realms of curriculum studies, literacy and SEN.

Chapter 3: Analysis

The analysis below is organised as follows: the 'story' of the FSQ from its inception to the point where it was taught by the participants of this study; following that, I present six narrative accounts. These accounts were paired with the aim of highlighting the different ways participants chose to respond to a challenging aspect of the teaching situations they relate to. The pairings were decided upon in response to the commonalities in particular challenges facing teachers, a shared facet which emerged as significant during my reading and re-reading of the data (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). As Esin (2011) notes, thematic narrative analysis lends itself to a focus on similarities and differences between narratives generated by interviews. The phenomena, the 'challenges' to which participants responded are inherent tensions within the way teachers perceived their work, the curriculum in hand, and their teaching aims. Cribb and Gewirtz (2005) come close to describing such a phenomenon when they contend that working in educational contexts towards 'all kinds of social justice' in practice may involve tensions between 'different facets of social justice'; an example from the cases below would be the tension between the benefits of the FSQ as preparation for work, and the wish to enhance cultural literacy amongst pupils.

The arrangement includes a 'constructed' narrative (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990); a thematic analysis of this narrative (Riesmann, 2008); and a 'problem-solution' analysis which addresses the particular tension over both accounts (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002).

The English Functional Skills Qualification

In September 2014, the specialist teaching service at the centre of this study began delivering the English FSQ as a 'SEN intervention' in a small number of Jewish schools in London. In this short section, I lay out the history of the qualification as it developed from inception to that point. This concise history will contextualise the daily practice which is narrated thereafter.

The FSQ qualification started out as a 'standards and assessment' framework (QCA, 2007) in 2007. At the time, it was part of a wide set of inter-related accredited qualifications which addressed "the important literacy, language and numeracy skills that are needed in everyday life and learning" (QIE, 2008). These included Basic Skills, Key Skills, and Skills for Life. To begin with, the FSQ in English, mathematics and information and communication technology was trialled in a three-year pilot programme. At its inception, the FSQ framework was intended to be embedded in the GCSE framework to designate within it the 'functional' elements of

English use – in the QIE document, presented as the skills which "help you gain the most out of work, education and everyday life". This was meant to be a requirement of achieving an A*-C grade in English. Late in the pilot, this intention was dropped, as the 'hurdle' (QCA, 2007) was deemed to be unworkable. Efforts from then on were focussed on designing stand-alone qualifications.

The genealogy of the FSQ can be traced to the publication of the Leitch Report (2006) which described a literacy crisis. Comparing the UK economy to that of other OECD countries, and emphasising a 'skills' agenda, the report claimed that "more than one in six young people leave school unable to read, write and add up properly". The response was a recommendation to reform the GCSE qualifications with a focus on functional literacy. This drive was picked up by the Education and Skills Select Committee (DfES, 2007), where the intention was made clear to "ensure that all young people are literate and numerate as they enter their teenage years. Because the basics are so critical to young people's chances, a further planned reform is the introduction of new Functional Skills qualifications." With that in mind, a three-year national pilot was set in motion. Following the trial, in September 2010 the FSQ was approved to be delivered by a number of exam boards, governed by subject criteria and Ofqual. A review in 2015 (Ofqual, 2015), found that FSQ were used widely in adult learning, further education post-16 learning, as a component of apprenticeship training, and at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) as a 'stepping stone' to GCSE. An ETF review in the same year (ETF, 2015) found that while improvements were needed, the FSQ were the second-best regarded qualifications nationally in England. In the academic year 2013-14, over a million certifications for FSQ were issued, and FSQ came in at 7% of accredited qualifications taken in England (ETF, 2015). The ETF study shows very clearly that the FSQ was designed to address 'employers' concerns', and within those concerns, the perceived level of learners' English was found to be most worrying for those employers surveyed. During the time of writing this paper, a new consultation was carried out on the FSQ; it was concluded in March 2018, and again found that while there were some improvements to be made – in relation to assessments, minimizing malpractice and setting standards, the FSQ was a valuable set of qualifications.

In terms of curricular control, the English FSQ represents a hybrid approach: on the one hand, it is governed by a set of 'standards' to frame teaching aims and assessments. On the other hand, it relies on teachers to interpret the oft-repeated statement of 'every day', 'real life', or 'functional, work-related' texts. In correspondence with senior policy advisors for post-16

basic skills qualifications, the DfE explained that while it was Ofqual which was charged with regulating the FSQ, they would expect texts to 'focus on practical application to work situations'. The 2018 English FSQ guidance (Ofqual, 2018: 15), sets out expectations that at Level 2, the Reading aspect taught material "should include a range of straightforward and complex texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade." While these guidelines appear rather vague and open to different interpretations, the recent Ofqual document (Ofqual, 2018) detailing the outcomes of the review of qualifications, re-establishes forcefully Ofqual's oversight of content, assessment procedures, and in the case of the English qualification, also imposes new emphasis on 'spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG)' in marking schemes. There are also guiding rules regarding the vocabulary expectations for the reading element in the Entry Level exams. And so, while the FSQ explicitly commits itself to a number of policy trends typically associated with neo-liberal or conservative agendas, such as a reductive 'functional' paradigm of literacy, propagating a literacy crisis narrative, and a drive to train low-skilled employees within these parameters it does leave a significant degree of curricular design autonomy to schools and teachers. As Schwab (1983: 240) noted, "curriculum is not something about which decisions can be certified in advance of trial as the best decisions". That is, in practice, the FSQ enables a curricular model of 'the practical'; teachers have curricular 'freedom' to reflect on their curricular practices and choices and to adapt in line with these reflections – in Schwab's metaphor, it is not the case that the aforementioned content guides for the FSQ are 'telegraphed from Moscow to the provinces'.

The English FSQ qualification, similarly to other 'skills-based' literacy qualifications, embodies in its curricular scope a significant break from what had traditionally been delivered as English school qualifications and curricula. As discussed in the Literature Review, the origins of these qualifications were in the classics and there has always been an emphasis on literary content; in fact, there has arguably been a bias towards privileging particular discourse forms associated with a 'cultural literacy' paradigm. The FSQ intentionally omitted such content from its design, focus, and assessment frameworks. It is also striking that compared to the English GCSE, the English FSQ provides a complete rejection of the other's view of the import of literature to general linguistic proficiency. The English National Curriculum statutory guidelines (DfE, 2014: 1) states:

> Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development.

And so, while this is arguably a significant aspect of the FSQ's design and ethos, it was only mentioned, almost in passing in the original consultation (QCA, 2007: 31):

> The key consideration for the introduction of functional English is the potential impact on curriculum content. There is a concern that this will require a reduction in content, particularly in relation to literature and the study of texts. Early analysis from the awarding body reports suggest that currently the English curriculum and consequent assessment for GCSE may be overburdened with non-functional repetitive elements relating to literary writing and the analysis of texts. It has been suggested that by refocusing the emphasis towards functional writing and associated activity it would be possible to 'make room' for functional skills without significant disruption. It is acknowledged, however, that further work is needed in this area.

Subsequent consultations did not demonstrate 'further work in this area', and to the best of my knowledge, the removal of what the document terms "non-functional repetitive elements" was from that point onwards treated as given. When I chAorresponded with DfE officers (private correspondence, March 2018), they explained this by referring to 'purpose and audience'. In respect of purpose, their explanation focussed on the difference between GCSE and FSQ: the latter had no intention to prepare for A levels, where 'higher order' content and skills were required. They then reclaimed the functional argument, stating they were looking to secure the 'basic literacy and numeracy that is needed for life and work'. In respect of the audience, the DfE officers pointed out that the majority of FSQ learners are adults and / or apprentices, for whom the study of English was not 'their primary learning aim'. They suggested that the 'comparative brevity' of the FSQ content enabled embedding it into wider vocational programmes. In correspondence with the exam board's representative (private correspondence with AQA, February 2018) this was echoed, stating again that the 'underlying philosophy when choosing what texts' to include in assessments relates to the 'functional' nature of the qualification, that is, choosing texts which relate to 'real life scenarios'. However, perhaps a more revealing correspondence was with a representative of a publishing company of FSQ textbooks (private correspondence, December 2017): in response to my questions about choice of texts, and particularly the absence of literary content, they refused to answer, arguing my question was 'slightly political' … and that as a company they can't comment on it.

Over the years, the assessment and source materials which constitute the endorsed FSQ textbooks, have in the main remained similar. Typically, these include national publications, newspapers, advertising campaigns and informational sources. A random survey of texts across different exam board past exam papers, an assortment of text books and material available online, brings up such texts as a web page explaining the virtues of observing a 'five a day' diet (from CPG textbook Level 2, 2016); a brochure on a Houses of Parliament Tour (AQA Reading, Level 2, 2015); a video guide to responding to a customer email (BBC Bitesize). Exam boards will take the source texts mentioned above and adapt them to the required level. The exam board representative I corresponded with added that they edit texts in order to 'use simple and accessible language in order to avoid artificial, construct irrelevant barriers'. This utilitarian – functional approach, which treats language use beyond those parameters as adornments and a negative barrier - is taken when designing reading comprehension assessments. In these, pupils are asked to respond to questions from the texts by way of choosing from a multiple-choice set of answers.

DfE representatives could find no historical documentation about the FSQ specifically for SEN pupils. Similarly, the Assessment Design Manager at one of the leading exam boards (private correspondence, March 2018) responded to my question about the suitability of the FSQ for teaching pupils with SEN, by saying that "all materials provide fair and equal access to all candidates regardless of ethnic background, religion, beliefs, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation"; a technical retort suggesting no particular intent to utilise the FSQ for teaching SEN pupils. In practice, the decision to teach the FSQ to SEN pupils relevant to this study was taken by heads of schools in consultation with SENDCos. The Head teacher of the school in which most of the teaching in this study takes place, explained (private correspondence, February 2018) they began offering Functional Skills when they realised some students needed an alternative to GCSE English or additional lessons to 'boost their knowledge and skills'. In respect of the suitability for SEN pupils, she commented that FSQ can be very suitable for students with SEN 'as they are much more accessible for our students'. She did raise a concern, however, that 'there is a large gap between FSQ and GCSE and it will become increasingly difficult for students to bridge the gap'. The SENDCo in the same school supported these arguments (private correspondence, February 2018): he commented that the FSQ has given some of his pupils 'their first taste of success', quoting a particular pupil: "This is the first thing we have ever passed, sir" and added hugely to their self-esteem. The SENDCo was also clear about the fact that employing the FSQ curriculum was, for him a SEN-related 'intervention': it provides, he explained a 'robust and structured programme of study that delivers literacy and

numeracy through real-world relevant learning', giving more concrete examples and learning, which mainstream lessons often fail to do. The considerations above in employing the FSQ in the schools featuring in this study, are consistent with what was identified as national trends: a DfE-commissioned study (DfE, 2017d: 83) found that post-16 providers tended to use FSQ "to encourage those with a lower GCSE grade to build up their basic knowledge of English and mathematics on an alternative course rather than expect students to continue studying for a qualification they have already failed."

It was following these decisions by Head Teachers and SENDCos, that in 2014 our Teaching Service began delivering FSQ sessions as a SEN intervention for literacy. The accounts that follow are the stories of the teachers in question taking up this task.

Liam and Sam: responding to the disadvantages of pupils with SEN

Liam and Sam taught the FSQ in a large Jewish secondary school. Their sessions were with small groups (up to eight pupils each) as part of the KS4 'choices' of subjects, although in truth, the pupils they taught were presented with the FSQ as the default choice due to their low attainment. Their sessions usually take place in the computer classroom or the creative science rooms, where there are enough computer terminals for each pupil to use. Several of the pupils Sam and Liam refer to participated in my IFS study. In the accounts, Sam and Liam seem to demonstrate opposing conceptualisations of both literacy and of SEN: on both counts, Sam puts forward a socially-informed version of the phenomenon, while Liam presents a broadly cognitive, skills-based approach. What Sam and Liam share, however, is a genuine concern for their pupils. The locus of this concern is the socio-educational disadvantage they each attribute to their pupils and its implications for their life-chances.

Liam: ***so people aren't detached***

Liam began teaching late in his working life. He had previously worked for more than twenty years in the IT industry. Liam framed his change of career in terms of looking for a vocation: "I think for me teaching; I'd done private tuition before and I felt that I could communicate well with people especially on an individual basis and make a difference to them and help them move on in their work and help them, give them confidence in other subjects as well." Liam worked for a disability charity and then as a supply teacher in a Further Education college before joining our specialist teaching team. While working, he completed a Masters in teaching numeracy and literacy.

Liam first taught the FSQ as a supply teacher in a Further Education college. His first impressions were positive: "at the time I thought the FSQ covers the main areas of learning that are relevant". These were, he explained, "reading, writing, communication, how to structure paragraphs, sentences, words, and using the language to communicate". Liam spoke about the purpose of teaching literacy in functional terms: "to give people the tools in order to live really, to communicate, to write letters, to apply for jobs, read newspapers, have a family." And perhaps in a direct reference to low-attaining, SEN pupils, he added: "helps you be understood so people aren't detached, people will be more inclusive in society."

Liam was very aware of the difference between the GCSE and FS qualifications. He saw the FSQ as an 'easier qualification' which is suited to those with SEN for that reason, as well as

for its focus on 'basic skills'. However, when pressed on the dichotomous nature of the two English qualifications, he shared the story of a couple of his pupils who were frustrated at being assigned to the FSQ. In respect of the literary content which is absent from the FSQ, he acknowledged that it "gives you access to English and look at things in a more reflective way and you can express personal interest and I suppose inspirations and personal tastes". He added that this isn't the case for example when "say writing their own words about their latest shopping trip", which was given as a typical example of a 'functional' task. In a later comment, Liam used an interesting expression to explain his view on the importance of culturally significant texts (e.g. Shakespeare); it 'gave muscle, strength' to individuals' way of learning.

When designing his sessions, Liam made extensive use of the FSQ textbooks available. His focus was twofold: the practice element of the skills, and what he considered to be relevance to pupils' life: "they're touching different areas of life and at the same time, learning skills and adopting skills and having lots of practice but relating to topics that they could recognise so it's not so distant from the student. So it's something they can discuss and have some kind of knowledge of." That ability to communicate and engage in meaningful conversation was an element which recurred throughout our conversation and appeared to be at the heart of the enterprise according to Liam. He commented, for instance: "I found a lot of people, people with special needs, they will have more difficulty in communicating with each other and they're looking for a direction through the teacher so I always encourage people to interact."

It was this agenda which informed Liam's choice of meaningful text he shared with me: a newspaper article detailing different aspects of environmental dangers, such as plastic pollution and global warming. He explained how he designed the sessions to meet the needs of his pupils, and what his aims were: "I had picture cards, colour cards, and they could choose a topic say polar bears or plastics or something, something that they could pick up, do some research, have some discussion and be able to present to the rest of the group. It's something they could make their own choice and I suppose use their own background to get started and to share that and to have a reason to find out more about it." It was the ability to socially engage with texts which Liam designated as having the most direct link between his literacy teaching and his pupils' life chances: "give them the ability and self-confidence to reason and to have the confidence to discuss a passage with other people, to be able to share." As an example of this, he told me how one particular pupil didn't respond the way he had expected to the environmental topic, yet the text still worked in respect of engaging in a wider conversation: "one person it's just like 'Well I don't care about the environment. I just throw stuff away'. But even then, to get a response, I could take that as a positive as well."

When asked about the links between teaching literacy and life chances, one of Liam's comments was striking: "when people leave school, it's important they can be able to ask for help when they need it have the skills in order to plan and take actions in life". I felt that Liam had a strong sense of 'need' in relation to his pupils, and this comment perhaps exposed the primacy of a 'remedial' approach to his literacy teaching.
Since teaching in our service, and taking part in this research, Liam has retired.

Sam: ***they're not going to be noticed for what else they have to offer***

Sam joined our team after working as Deputy Head Teacher of a special school. He qualified as a History teacher in 1979, and found himself in the special needs arena by chance: "When I qualified, I couldn't get a job teaching History in a secondary school and I then ended up in a special needs school essentially for a term and I stayed there and I stayed there for the rest of my career and I made a career out of teaching children with special needs." The way Sam expresses himself here suggests that he is well-informed about educational policy and its shifts, and my comments immediately after our interview confirm this impression. Presumably this familiarity follows years in leadership roles and a deep involvement over time with SEN. The first part of our conversation indeed reflected on the shifting educational landscape: he commented that special schools had "no real structure to them; it was pre-Ofsted, pre-National Curriculum; schools largely did what they had to do."
Sam contended that his career "mirrors the whole concept of inclusion": he told me about the changes in the pupil body in special schools, where to begin with, he worked mainly with pupils with 'moderate learning difficulties', and this changed to a higher proportion having global delay, Severe Learning Difficulties, and an increased focus on "specific areas like autism". Sam found that by the mid-90s, pupils with moderate learning difficulties had "largely disappeared" from special schools; those pupils whom he would have taught functional literacy as preparation for work, were now part of "an inclusion team" in a mainstream school. Sam remembered one particular pupil whom he had taught and felt had a good outcome as a specific example of the 'type' of pupil who was now likely to attend a mainstream school. He pointed out that this has had direct impact on the kind of literacy which was taught: "functional literacy became a much more difficult and complex area", where communication was often dependant on Makaton (a form of sign language), and reading books "was something else", namely an unrealistic proposition for many of his pupils. Lastly, Sam substantiated his comment about

mirroring the developments in SEN by observing how much more "data-driven" special needs is nowadays.

Sam's second job was in what was considered to be a leading special needs school, and he was offered the opportunity to study for a Post-Graduate Diploma in SEN in Cambridge. He pointed out that this meant that his specialism was not in a particular subject area but "generally the concept of teaching in that area" (of SEN).

Sam first taught the English FSQ in a special school sixth form, a context where it was very closely linked to employment, as "the language and the literacy came related" to pupils' work placements. To begin with, Sam saw two advantages to this qualification: firstly, he appreciated what he saw as "teaching real skills". These were related to several examples he gave during the interview, such as identifying the importance of different items in one's post; writing a letter; being able to order food from a menu. Secondly, Sam felt it was beneficial that pupils could access an accredited qualification, even if they were below the required level for success in the GCSE qualification. However, on both counts he also identified substantial issues and tensions.

Firstly, the dilemma around the 'real skills': Sam contended that the increased focus on functional literacy goes against the notion of teaching a wider set of literacy practices, like art and poetry. These elements "contribute to the spirit of the human being and therefore we ought to find a way of dealing with it, even the lower ability kids". Sam continued to state that there was a more principled point at hand: it was about "doing something because it is worthwhile doing because it's good in itself". Finding ways to allow access to literature, for example, to these pupils was possible, but was very challenging because "we're in a system that demands outcomes". Finally, though, Sam objected to the way the functional literacy argument is typically presented as a utilitarian stance: "But in terms of using that particular type of literacy to improve their functioning in society; that's the dilemma. What a utilitarian function is, are we trying to expand the whole experience that they have so they enjoy it."

Sam's second concern about the FSQ related to the weight of the qualification's credentials; or as he phrased it, the FSQ's 'currency': "The view I always take is that every qualification you get at GCSE Level, they're tickets to the next stage and the lower level qualifications don't necessarily buy you that ticket."

Having set out the concerns and limitations of the literacy framework as Sam was teaching it, I wondered if and how he tried to mitigate the difficulties. Sam explained that while he did use texts from formal schemes related to the FSQ (texts books and internet resources), he didn't restrict himself to these, and he tried to tailor the texts taught in class to the particular make-up

of pupils, and their interests. The example he chose was an article about an international football match in the 1930s between England and Germany. The title of the article was: *Why did the swastika fly at White Hart Lane?* Sam explained why he chose this particular text: "one person in the group was very keen on history, the others were very much focused on their experience as Jews and they all followed football and so I thought I'll take these three things as an event that is not only reading…. but then trying to go outside that one to think how they would respond to that as an individual given what I thought about the group."

Sam sees a direct link between the literacy skills his pupils acquire at school and their life chances: "the ability to use language well is an extra rung up the ladder". He hoped that he taught his pupils the ability to "relate what you've learnt to something else". Elsewhere he evoked critical literacy: an important aim of teaching English for him was to enable his pupils to understand that "stuff (texts) that they see in front of them is more than just words; it actually represents a series of opinions." Underlying all of our conversation, though, was his concern that his low-attaining SEN pupils were disadvantaged in school and in danger of remaining so in the adult world: "I think of anything that we teach, that's fundamental and without it, a poor inarticulate person, you're not going to make their needs known, they're not going to express ideas, they're not necessarily going to be noticed for what else they have to offer."

The literacy story:

When Liam explained his understanding of the purpose of teaching literacy, he expressed what seemed to me to be an 'autonomous' (Street, 1984) model of literacy. It is seen as an acquirable 'skill', the mastering of which will be associated with personal benefits: the ability to 'live well'; the opening of employment possibilities; having a family. Similarly, Liam stated the FSQ had the advantage of 'being relatively easier' than the GCSE, but still affording pupils a qualification, here echoing Freebody and Luke's (1990) notion of 'job-credential demands'. Liam went on to link literacy with 'reason', which NLS writers see as a corner-stone of the autonomous model (Street, 1984; Gee, 1991). Liam did acknowledge the weight associated with cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1983; 1985), but presented it in a narrow context. When referring both to general literary content and to poetry, he spoke about enhancing very personal aspects of learning: "personal interests, inspirations and personal tastes". He contended that literary content might allow more reflection and assist artistic expression. What was absent from his analysis was any wider cultural argument (e.g. the utilitarian import of educating pupils in a cultural canon), and a more socially-focussed prism. Even the forceful expression "it gives

more muscle", referred to an added layer to one's learning capacity, rather than to one's place in society.

Sam expressed an understanding of literacy as a social practice not to be seen, understood – or taught – as a neutral skill set. The functional approach to literacy is to Sam one "particular type of literacy"; not the only one. In respect of the functional paradigm, Sam expressed some concern around the limitation of the approach, vis-à-vis the lack of content which would contribute to the 'spirit' of pupils. Literacy, in Sam's eyes, was an arena of concern and possible reflection and reproduction of his pupils' social disadvantage.

Sam appears to represent two responses to the functional literacy approach which produce a significant tension. On the one hand, he approved of the drive to "teach real skills". On the other hand, Sam voiced the concern that the FSQ in effect positions his pupils in a disadvantaged state: the qualification does "not have a great deal of currency". It's also true that the curricular elements which fit into the functional literacy paradigm (e.g. letter writing, ordering pizza etc.) only fostered the kind of passive use of language which has a reproductive function and is associated with 'politically compliant' subjects (Hyslop-Margison and Pinto). It was interesting to note that when Sam referred to the 'utilitarian' argument questioning its validity, he stated that without investing in his pupils a grasp of literary language, for instance, they will not be able "to express ideas... not necessarily going to be noticed…" There is a link between literacy instruction and social standing, and Sam's sentiment echoes the NLS position that literacy is not merely a neutral skill to be technically mastered: its instruction involving "moral, political, and cultural decisions about the kind of literacy practices needed to enhance… people's agency over their life trajectories" (Luke and Freebody, 1999: 2).

A four resources analysis: within Liam's explanations of the way he designed and conducted his lessons, two features appear to hold significant importance. Firstly, the 'functional' aspect of learning activities; here, pupils were given tasks requiring an understanding of 'generic structures found in written texts' (Freebody and Luke, 1990), which broadly align with the Text Participant role (or, semantic competence). This would have been played out to a great degree within Liam's use of the FSQ, exam-board-endorsed, textbooks. More prominent, though, according to Liam's account, was the emphasis on literacy as social participation: where he felt he was having an important impact was in enhancing his pupils' ability to 'negotiate the social relations' around texts (Luke and Freebody, 1999). This is where Liam spoke about 'discussing a passage' with others, gesturing towards the ability to know "what our culture counts to be adequate reading". These activities fall under the Text User, or pragmatic competence, because

the skills practised in Liam's classroom within these activities are of social participation. I also noted that Liam was very keen to support the pupils in knowing what to do 'in particular social contexts other than those of the specialised site of the classroom' (Freebody and Luke, 1990). For Liam, it seems that the use of media and current affairs-related texts allowed him to bridge the gap between the school and out-of-school literacy.

If we consider Sam's account of his teaching in respect of the Four Roles Model, much of his work, which would typically be termed 'functional', such as reading and writing letters or CVs falls under the Text Participant role. Here, readers call upon the "unexplicated aspects of texts" (Freebody and Luke, 1990) such as their generic conventions. It also reaches into the Text User resource – calling on pragmatic competence, as these textual activities involve "knowing about and using the various…functions of texts, and being able to respond to texts…" (Rush, 2004: 38), including bridging the gap to out-of-school contexts. Sam was clear though that he felt he needed to go beyond the "actual content of the scheme" to source textual materials which would serve wider purposes for his pupils. This could probably be a response to a lack in the breadth of repertoire (Luke at al., 2011) in respect of both *genre* and *literacy practice*: the 'scheme' Sam referred to, included in the main short, practical texts such as health leaflets and formal emails. The literacy activities corresponding to these typically demanded a 'functional' written response intended to mimic expectations in the work, or 'adult' world.

The text Sam chose to give as an example of a successful source text, the article about the England match at White Hart Lane, encompasses yet a wider set of competences. Clearly, the competencies of a code breaker were required throughout the work on this text; secondly, as Sam commented, "the first task was quite close questions; what would have happened, was there an opposition to it which is all in the body" (of the text) pupils would have to utilise the semantic competences such as employing their understanding of genre and narrative structure and utilising a relevant set of vocabulary (Rush, 2004).

As Text User, learners' pragmatic competences were to be used as they tackle different purposes of reading, and acting upon what "our culture counts to be adequate reading" (Feebody and Luke, 1990) in a particular context - here Sam emphasised the conversational aspects of the session –"So it's about discussion, taking a source and thinking it through". I noted, however, that in this particular case, there wasn't an apparent link to equivalent out-of-school literacy practices; this was, then, activity directed specifically at the 'institutional context' (Luke et al., 2011) of school-based literacy talk.

Finally, Sam aimed to activate learners' *critical competence*: "it's about discussion, taking a source and thinking it through so there's the development of a thinking skill… the stuff that they see in front of them is more than just the words; it actually represents a series of opinions". Here, Sam showed an ambition to foster a critical reader's ability within the group, following Luke and Freebody's (1999: 5) notion of the text critic as a reader able of "acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral". It is also important in this case to note Sam's comments on furthering the comprehension tasks in relation to his chosen text: "then trying to go outside that one to think how they would respond to that as an individual… how does this relate to an experience that they would have had had they been living in that time, how do you think they would have felt". Sam was relating to his pupils' Jewish identity, which calls into attention the assertion that comprehension is itself a social and intellectual practice; that in order to achieve meaningful and long-lasting gains in this practice, there is a need for "substantive curricular foci on community cultural content and knowledge" (Luke et al., 2011: 158). The explicit attempt to encourage a conversation about pupils' positioning in relation to the text fits in with the critical set of competencies: it sheds some light on "not only the reader's knowledge, but… the ideological position of the reader" (Freebody and Luke, 1990). I would call this a mild, or 'soft' version of critical literacy, for while Sam did work on the critical skills of addressing the texts' own bias, points of view and reflect the values of the writer, the group stopped short of activity which "has an explicit aim of the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems" (Shor, 2012a). In other words, there was no explicit reference to what Sam clearly perceived as the disadvantage his pupils faced as SEN pupils accessing the FSQ.

The SEN story:

Liam's account of designing and teaching FSQ sessions positions literacy instruction in this context as a SEN 'intervention'. This is true in respect of his own teaching history, where he began by teaching pupils with special needs, and it is true of the way he framed his teaching, as 'being more focussed on their needs', and 'lending them a hand'. The general thrust of his examples revolved around 'tackling' social situations: from applying for jobs, through 'making complaints', to paying bills and 'asking for help'. The fundamental function of literacy related to the ability to share social practices, and can be broadly seen as a form of social participation (which features extensively in the SEND Code of Practice). Liam characterised his pupils as struggling with communication and saw minimising these difficulties as a major aim of his teaching. His response emphasised activities to enable his pupils to 'join civic conversations

‘(Jaeger, 2017) related to current affairs, access national media, or as Liam put it, “pick up a newspaper, share stories, be able to express their views in society”. While Liam was clearly aware of the disadvantages associated with his pupils’ SEN and socio-educational position, his interview brought up several factors which were recently highlighted (Jaeger, 2017) as having a role in the ‘reproduction of vulnerability’ in low-attaining readers.

In her analysis of the ways in which educational systems (re)produce vulnerable readers as part of the neo-liberal drive to sustain the unequal distribution of knowledge and power, Jaeger (2017: 980) highlighted practices which are relevant to Liam’s account. Firstly, she speaks of ability groupings and their pedagogic consequences, among them “tasks focused on repeated practice of isolated, decontextualized skills, particularly decoding” and “more closed and fewer critical questions”. While Liam had demonstrated that he is cognisant of consulting pupils’ interests in designing tasks, and he encourages debate, it is difficult to dispute the propensity of ‘skills-based’, closed questions in the standard FSQ practice and assessment materials. Jaeger further highlighted the isolating aspect of literacy ‘interventions’, and this is clearly a factor at play in the FSQ sessions run by our teaching service. In these sessions, Liam taught small groups of 4-5 pupils, who spent a large part of their school day solely with fellow low attaining pupils, and as Jaeger points out, there tends to be a longer-term impact on pupils’ self-perception as readers. These tenets were reflected in Liam’s account of his pupils’ frustrations at being excluded from the GCSE classes at the expense of the FSQ; he recalled that “at times some of the people come into the class in tears”. Another concern related to ‘interventions’, and their limited scope to stretch and challenge pupils related to Jaeger’s (2107: 980) comment that “students are viewed as lacking in capacity and motivation for challenging work and therefore, they are given only the isolated skills lessons which appear to be within their abilities”. Liam seemed to be in this very same cycle; he spoke of the FSQ as being a ‘relatively easier option’, which his pupils had ‘more potential to achieve’. In the GCSE framework, he feared they would ‘get lost’, and ‘lose track’. And indeed, while he recognised the power of other, higher-order literacy activities, he seemed resigned to leave those to an unspecified point in the future: “they’re learning more basic skills… rather than stuff that could be done in time in the future”.

By his own account, Sam’s career “mirrored the change” in education. He mentioned a number of general developments in the educational landscape: the introduction of the National Curriculum and the current inspection framework, Ofsted as well as literacy-specific developments. Specifically in relation to SEN, Sam highlighted two factors which are closely associated to changes identified by SEN scholars. SEN, alongside the wider education system,

has become "much more data driven". As Tomlinson (2012) highlighted, there is increased pressure on SEN professionals to demonstrate the value of their work by way of accreditation. In fact, it is Tomlinson's argument that what she calls the 'rise of the SEN industry' is in part a *result* of the wider trend of 'raising standards'. Sam, for his part, saw this trend as having an adverse effect on teachers' attempts to address those aspects of literacy education which are not strictly speaking 'functional' such as poetry: "there are ways in which you can present poetry for example in a way which it does engage… (but) as I said we're in a system that demands outcomes".

Secondly, Sam commented on the dramatic increase in the number of pupils with identified SEN at mainstream schools since he started teaching: "kids that I was teaching say in the early 80s now were part of the inclusion team" (in mainstream schools). He complemented this statement with an example: "One of my students in my first ever class now owns a chain of hairdressing salons in North East London… By the time I left teaching in schools in 2015, you wouldn't get that type of child in the school I was working at". Tomlinson (2012: 275) makes this exact claim: "the ideology and practice of inclusive education has brought into mainstream schools and colleges large numbers of young people who would previously have been segregated in special schools". Elsewhere Tomlinson, (2015), writing this time after the introduction of the current SEND CoP, associates the concept of inclusion in England with *elaboration*: "Elaboration is more than simply expansion. It involves large changes in parts of the system…" such as the introduction of "lower level vocational courses… to lead on to progression to further courses or into employment", much like the use of the FSQ as discussed in this study.

Sam and Liam: two ways of understanding disadvantage, two different responses

The disadvantage associated with their pupils' SEN plays a prominent role in the way Sam and Liam relate their teaching the English FSQ. Their understanding and articulation of the nature of this disadvantage, has in my opinion, powerful bearings on my research questions.

Sam and Liam differ in their interpretation of the two issues at the heart of this study. In respect of conceptualizing literacy, Sam was clear that he sees this as a socially-informed set of practices. For him, 'functional' literacy was not a neutral, unproblematic approach. His account and consequent analysis unearth several tensions within this approach. Crucially, Sam had no hesitation in seeking to broaden the repertoire of texts he found for his pupils, and often looked for texts which reflect his pupils' interests, but also socio-cultural contexts. This was

exemplified by his choice text, where he also engaged his pupils in some aspects of critical literacy. Liam saw literacy as a neutral skill set, which he aimed to furnish his pupils with. In this context, Liam was satisfied with using the exam-board-endorsed text books to facilitate the 'functional' work, complementing these with current affairs texts. Importantly, the latter were used to practice 'social skills' – speaking about fostering 'confidence to discuss a topic'. The four resources model sheds light on the different approaches the two adopt, highlighting the fact that Sam was using textual work to expose and discuss ideological 'bias, points of view, gaps and silences' (Ludwig, 2013), while Liam's focus was firmly on the pragmatics of 'what to do with a text in a particular context'.

Another facet of the different approaches adopted by the two is the nature of the disadvantage they both identify in their pupils. In Sam's account, the disadvantage lies in a wider educational-social context. Based on his professional biography, he described from personal experience the changes he had seen in special and mainstream education; he explained that these changes directly affect his pupils, principally because in the past some of them would have been given specialist support in a special school - but they are now classified as 'low-attaining' in a mainstream context - a phenomenon Tomlinson (2015) calls elaboration. In other references to his pupils' disadvantage, Sam critiqued the 'currency' of the FSQ, and questioned its ability to enhance his pupils' life chances. Significantly, in all these discussions about disadvantage, Sam puts forward broadly systemic explanations, locating the disadvantage in social change and structure, much as one would within a social model of disability paradigm (Oliver, 2013). Liam, in contrast, located the disadvantage within his pupils, which was evident in much of his language: 'people with special needs, they will have more difficulty in communicating'; pupils were 'looking for a direction through the teacher'; the need to support them 'asking for help', in many cases depicting his work as 'altruistic' (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002). He further tied in his notions of SEN disadvantage with the aforementioned attitude to literacy instruction, when referring to some of the 'functional' work he carried out: "lending hand in how to actually do the shopping rather than focus on the language around it"; this reinforcing the altruistic approach, and removes the emphasis from the linguistic exploration which is tied in with pragmatic and critical practices as set out in the four resources model. Tellingly, Liam spoke about "getting them to *integrate* into society" as opposed to critiquing it (or adopting the language of *inclusion*).

Gina and Orna: English literacy in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community

The next two accounts refer to literacy teaching to SEN pupils in ultra-orthodox Jewish secondary schools; they are single-sex schools, whose pupils and staff are all female. The FSQ sessions here are taught to individual pupils who are taken out of their class for them. The sessions take place in small rooms, typically just large enough for a table and a couple of chairs – often these spaces are temporary structures (porta cabins). A Learning Support Assistant is usually present during the session. Gina and Orna, the two teachers featuring in the accounts below, share their thoughts on the meaning of literacy in this social context, and how they adapted their curricular design, approaches and textual choices in light of these realisations. I believe it is useful to present these two narratives together because of the tenet they have in common: their understanding that what counts as literate, the social uses of (English) literacy, and what is literate functionality are socially constructed.

Gina: *we just call someone; we don't fill in the form*

Gina qualified as a primary teacher in 2006 and took up a teaching position in a mainstream primary school where she taught for four years, after which she trained Teaching Assistants, and joined our Teaching Service seven years ago. Gina commented that she doesn't "feel very confident in the syllabus in understanding what it is". She explained that she was asked to work with the FSQ as part of her 'thinking skills' instruction (this is a meta-cognitive intervention) with one particular pupil. Consequently, her approach to curriculum design was: "I started from the end point of the test papers and worked backwards, to what do they need to know, and how to do it? How can I relate that to her general targets of understanding a problem, which is one of her thinking skills targets which is to just be able to identify what is it that she's being asked to do? So, a lot about understanding what the question means." Her initial appraisal of the qualification wasn't very positive; she used many past exam papers and found these "really dry".

When we spoke about the purpose of studying English, Gina put forward what felt like a relatively minimalist expectation: she wanted her pupils to be able to respond to a text, to "independently be able to unpick it and use it and that they can get meaning from it." Her understanding of the concept of being literate was firmly rooted in a functional literacy approach: "to make sense of the things that they see and they read and they come into contact

with every day. I don't think it means that they need to be able to pick up a book necessarily but they need to be able to read the road signs or the information on a packet of food or something like that." Her curricular choices around texts were informed by this approach. Apart from past papers, Gina tried to "work out what things they are going to be dealing with in life". The examples she gave were strikingly functional: recipes, instructional texts, forms, shopping mall maps, medicine packets.

These texts were chosen for their relevance to 'daily life', but another layer was added when I asked Gina to consider this type of literacy teaching compared to the one she received as a school pupil: she introduced a concept of 'ownership'. I understood Gina to be making two salient points: firstly, that she wanted to engage her pupils with texts they would feel some 'ownership' over. I took this to mean having an understanding of why the particular text is important to them and being able to access it: "so I think that when I choose texts I try and choose texts that I think they feel are important to them in some way. And when I start with a text I'll often be like, well why do we have it? What's it about? What's it going to teach us? Is it important that we have it? And kind of question the validity of the text and I'll get them to ask questions like what do they think this text is going to be about?" Shakespeare, for example (this example was given by Gina, unprompted), "I don't think they would feel it was for them. Not just because of their background but because it's so many levels above and I think that's wrong".

A second point I took from the way Gina described the 'ownership' idea related to her own schooling: "I think what I probably got taught in school in that sense is kind of the same that I should be able to take a text and tackle it and that text is for me, but I think it was done in, we kind of skipped out the everyday texts around us and went straight to the higher culture texts." Gina was pointing out the benefits of the kind of literacy instruction she provides to her pupils: "whereas here everything is unpicked very carefully and taken step by step and very small steps". I suspect that she was also commenting on the fact that within the cultural literacy paradigm, her own 'ownership' of what she termed 'high culture' was assumed.

The text Gina chose to share as a successful text in her session was an Underground map. She explained the choice of this multi-modal text in pedagogic terms, seeking the balance between accessibility and curricular priorities. "There was a sense of familiarity with the text, like she'd looked at it before, so it wasn't completely new to her but there was, when we started talking

about it it was apparent that there were lots of things that she didn't get about it, she didn't understand why they were different colours, what it meant, where they were. She didn't know where her station was on the map so we looked at that. Words like platform she didn't have, we looked at the code at the key and spoke about how you use that information, grid references, so like B3 so that she could work out how to find something, we spoke about Northbound, Southbound, so points of the compass and I just felt like it was a single text that yielded so much information and good discussion. And she could see that it was applicable to her".

The Underground map seems to perfectly represent an 'everyday life' textual artefact. It adheres to the proclaimed aims of the FSQ, and to the SEN-related needs as teachers perceived them. Exploring it as a pedagogic resource, though, extenuates the social reality of what is considered to be everyday life. While Gina thought that this was a very useful session and that the Underground map was valuable as a resource, she doubted that this pupil would actually be able to travel independently; her vulnerabilities in school would be amplified in society. Gina believed her pupil would be 'overwhelmed' in an Underground station.

The specific cultural context of Gina's teaching was evident, though it did not monopolize our conversation. Two main implications emerged from the location of English literacy teaching within the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. When discussing the concept of cultural literacy, Gina commented: "I don't know what their cultural capital is, like is it in their cultural world is probably more relevant to be able to relate a parable from the Talmud which I can't do and that gives them their cultural capital. Whereas I don't know how much they are outside of their environment to be able to use that cultural capital. I think it's really valuable and I would love to teach that to them and to share it with them but I, for me I don't see it as a priority because I don't know how much opportunity they would then have to talk about it. And I kind of wonder how much cultural capital there is of, to use Shakespeare as the example, within their community, I don't know how many of them would know what "out damn spot" means, I don't know." Another comment Gina made prompted me to think about literacy as social practice: she described choosing some forms which were 'culturally appropriate' to use as texts in her sessions. But rather than the response she was hoping for ("they're going to understand this, they're going to need to, they'll get it"), the pupils explained she had misunderstood the literacy practices of their community: "they were just like, well we just call someone, we don't fill in a form. If you want to do it you just ring up and you speak to the person, it's not that cultural way. And then there was another form they were filling in another student said, but I wouldn't, I'd ask that person to fill it in for me." It is, Gina felt, an additional challenge she

must overcome: “I think there is a cultural value laid on the kind of texts that we use, it’s not seen as significant, the kind of stuff that we’re looking at.”

Orna: ***there is no beauty***

Orna qualified as a secondary Religious Studies teacher in 1997 and spent her first two years as a qualified teacher in a large, Jewish secondary school. She then went on to complete a Master’s in child psychotherapy. She was hoping to continue to a doctorate, but personal circumstances made her return to teaching, this time in a special needs primary school. Two years ago, Orna joined our specialist teaching service.

Her first impressions of the FSQ were very positive and centred on the possibility of enabling her lower-attaining pupils to achieve a recognised qualification: “I thought this is genius. I have these girls in high school… who are not going to be doing GCSEs … and in Year 11 I just knew … it’s like not just like you’re taking an exam but that you’re in the kind of zone of doing your GCSEs and you feel like it and you’re preparing for something and you chat to your friends about it and you get a certificate at the end and there’s like a point and you have an exam pencil case and I thought these girls need to be doing that, they need to be feeling that they’re doing something that is worthwhile and also that they’re going to get something from it and that they can talk to their friends about it.” Orna alluded to the benefits of achieving the qualification, emphasising the social aspects, and indeed she reported that her pupil at the time ‘felt empowered’ by the formal appearance of the practice paper when she brought it to their session.

When we discussed the question of the aims of teaching literacy, Orna began by representing a functional approach: “So simple things such as filling in a form or writing a letter, even though we don’t write letters anymore; we do emails, I think it’s very important. There’s the functional aspect of it”. This understanding of literacy echoed with Orna’s usual choice of source materials: she used past exam papers, extracts from a community magazine, and medical leaflets. Another facet to Orna’s understanding of the purpose of her teaching literacy seemed to be closely tied with the nature of her pupils’ challenges, and evoked the struggle for inclusion: “I think it’s like a little bit cutting someone’s ability to not be able to be like that (literate) and why do you need to communicate in the world? Because otherwise you can’t access things; you can’t, simple things of filling in a form.” I felt it was also significant that again Orna assigned a social significance to the notion of being literate; it was not only the

need to "be able to read and write in order to function in the world and they need to be able to speak coherently and write coherently". It was also the ability to "*sound* literate basically".

Within the same answer, though, Orna also identified a deficiency in this approach to teaching literacy; "There's the functional aspect of it but then there's also the beauty aspect of it that some literature… that is beautiful and we're made of many complex things and whether you believe in a soul or not, we all like need to be uplifted in some way and literature can uplift us and it can reach a part of us that functional skills cannot and I think that's very important for everyone as a long term thing and I think in the same way that children need to play because it helps with their development on many different levels particularly emotional." Orna commented that she wasn't addressing this inadequacy because of time pressures, but she did identify an opening to change this: "I do feel it's missing and it could be part of my brief. The truth is there are time constraints… but I feel why not spend 10 minutes at the end of it. I don't think she'll be able to read the text herself but if I read a text to her and spoke about what that means and how the themes connect within the language and then we could talk about it but I actually think that would be enjoyable for her." This aspect of literacy was important, she contested – again using the term 'access': "to be able to access different parts of yourself". Orna's sentiments again turned to this deficiency when she reflected on her own literacy education: she attended a "very academic" school and had "never done anything like this". This led her to reflect that "I think the only thing missing from Functional Skills is there is no beauty; there's no like, there's nothing you can disappear into".

But perhaps it was the notion of the challenges her pupils face that held most weight when Orna considered her priorities. She used an interesting metaphor when explaining these challenges: "if we go to Japan when we look around, we feel like we're not really part of things because we can't read the language, you can't read the signs, we can't navigate the situation entirely and I think if a child is illiterate then they're in Japan a lot, they're in Japan the whole time really and even if we're able to help them to vaguely access a bit, they can't really understand what's in front of them, a menu, a recipe. They're just there in Japan basically… I think it's very painful because they're shut off and they're not like, they're not able to exist fully." While Orna clearly identified the gap in the FSQ, where the need for beauty and a spiritual aspect of literacy instruction was not addressed, ultimately she felt that her FSQ sessions were having a real impact. Talking about one pupil, she said: "I'm telling you; even her posture has been different since she's been doing this. She's every week instead of coming

in and slumping… she's sitting better… because of Functional Skills. I give her the paper. We start reading through it. We start looking at it. We start navigating it and she's happy."

The literacy story: Gina's representation of literacy was multi-layered. Regarding the taught school-based literacy she was involved in, she espoused a functional approach, aiming to equip her pupils with the ability to respond to 'daily life' literacy demands. These were manifestly mundane and low-level demands such as reading road signs and food packaging. Interestingly, her 'functional' approach to literacy wasn't concerned with preparation for employment, as is often the case when using such an approach (Levine, 1986). Rather, she described literacy functionality in terms of being able to orient oneself in daily life and basic social contexts. A similar point was made by, amongst others, Canale and Swain (1980) and Hymes (1971) when they articulated a version of literacy functionality which is concerned with the psycholinguistic abilities underpinning such competencies. As Verhoeven (1994) noted, these approaches are rooted in what later became known as the autonomous (Street, 1984) model of literacy. Thus, Gina saw her role as equipping her pupils with a 'skill set' which would allow civic, community, and personal functioning. This approach was epitomised by many of Gina's textual choices, such as using health campaign texts, and recipes. Conceptualising her work is further complicated when considering that from the outset, Gina saw her FSQ sessions in the context of meta-cognitive instruction. Here, the literacy 'skills' were in fact taught with a primary aim of furthering those wider cognitive skills; Gina explained that she 'worked backwords' from exam papers that gave examples of the kinds of tasks her pupil should be able to tackle. In terms of tying this in with literacy frameworks, this could be an example of teaching explicitly aimed at furthering what Lea and Street (2006) termed 'academic literacy'. While their focus was firmly on higher education, it seems reasonable to contend that similarly, high school literacy practices involve "adapting to new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge" (Lea and Street, 1988). Gina spoke about the need to foster within her pupil the ability to understand what needs to be done, how to do it; she focussed on 'general understanding of the problem'. Implicit in this aspect of Gina's work is, I think, the recognition that academic or school-based literacy (including the assessment frameworks which were at play here) is not a 'neutral' technical skill, but rather a particular modality of literacy. Here, then, Gina departs from the autonomous model of literacy, not merely instructing a technical skill as in the case of the recipes or promotional texts. In this context, her pupil was *knowingly* 'inducted' into a particular type of literacy, where pupils need to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices.

Gina also introduced to our conversation the notion of 'ownership', which I take to be a meditation on literacy and its instruction. Within it, a broadly socially-informed conceptualization of literacy appeared to drive Gina's curricular choices. In the simplest terms, Gina wished to avoid using textual materials which they couldn't easily relate to their lives, and which she believed they would struggle to access. This sentiment holds a striking resemblance to Freebody and Luke's (1990: 10) assertion that "the use of texts about which learners have limited background knowledge can be a hindrance to comprehension". Gina spoke about this point in moral terms, claiming that presenting such texts (particularly those of a higher level of difficulty) would be 'wrong'. The second manifestation of the ownership concept is shown in Gina's recollections of her own literacy schooling. When she compared the aims of her own schooling and the teaching she herself carries out, she contended that the aims were in fact similar: in both cases, it was about being able to "take a text and tackle it"; moreover, to 'own' it: "and that text is for me". The difference was in the textual content. Gina explained that when she was schooled, they "went straight to the higher culture texts". Gina here articulated a key tension which plays out in the literacy instruction of SEN pupils: on the one hand, the notion of working with texts which would be both 'functional' and recognisable to pupils seems valid. On the other, by doing so exclusively, pupils are not given the opportunity to be exposed to, take part in or interrogate 'higher culture' texts.

Orna was, on the one hand, guided by a functional literacy approach when designing her sessions; literacy is a skill to be acquired which will give pupils 'access' to services. It was typified by examples Orna gave examples like writing letters, reading community newsletters and health leaflets: "because the fact is… this girl in her life might have to pop to the doctor for herself or a member of her family and she needs to be able to understand those leaflets." However, within this seemingly 'autonomous' version of literacy, Orna also appeared to recognise the social aspects of different types of literacy and their value in particular social contexts. This was manifested firstly in her recognition that particular textual choices would not be 'palatable' in the ultra-orthodox community. Secondly, Orna made the telling remark that it is important to not only 'communicate coherently', but also to 'sound' literate; this suggests that she sees an element of cultural capital in literacy capability. Thirdly, Orna tied the functionality element to a very specific cultural context: "I get nervous if I think oh my goodness this child is now 16 because of the community that she's in, she really actually could be married by 18-19 and then she could be having to go to health care professionals for whatever might happen for her and she can't read what a form to fill in and that makes me very

scared." Here then, being 'functional' isn't seen in the context of employability or 'employment credentials' (Luke and Freebody, 1990); it was implicitly linked to what Orna perceived as the typical place of a young woman within this particular community. Perhaps the most striking implication of attitude to literacy instruction is, that within it, "the very meaning of 'being functional' here is of being adapted to the way things are" (Lankshear, 2002), in a particular cultural context. This exemplifies a tension where the work teachers carry out to enable their pupils to 'overcome' barriers associated with SEN, might seem at odds with the societal realities they are inducting into and the social roles they are preparing them for.

Orna also spoke about aspects of literacy which she doesn't typically address in her sessions, but which she clearly saw as extremely important: what she called 'the beauty aspect' – literary content. Orna claimed that there was an aesthetic absence in the FSQ: there is'beauty' in literature, which can "uplift us and it can reach a part of us that functional skills cannot". Orna went on to make another far-reaching claim about the value of studying literature: "I think in the same way that children need to play because it helps with their development on many different levels particularly emotional. I think that adults need to play in their heads a bit… to be able to access different parts of yourself." While Orna's concern is clearly with pupils who are low-attaining, and her hopes realistically centre upon proving to her pupils that "By the way don't think all books are intimidating", the argument about accessing parts of one's self by way of literature, of developing emotionally is similar to the one Maxine Greene (1965) made about the power of literature to "combat meaningless". Greene's argument is deeply complex, but in essence is remarkably similar: the question is are young people given the right type of literacy resources to deal with moral ambiguities?

Interestingly, Orna expanded her literary argument to relate to the particular religious context of her pupils: in our conversation, she considered how she might integrate literary content into her sessions. She spoke of "a beautiful passage… where he talks about drinking a glass of water and so I thought that I could read that to her and talk to her about drinking a glass of water and what that means and also that has a religious layer that you drink a glass of water and you make a blessing and then it can be connected to her and her life so it's a bit more functional for her but she's feeling and seeing the beauty of literature".

A four resources analysis:

As is commonly the case with the standard, exam-based materials of the FSQ, much of Gina's work was focussed on the semantic competences of her pupils. As Gina commented directly,

they are asked to engage their own prior knowledge and access meanings of different texts (Rush, 2004). This is true in the context of the past paper, reading comprehension tasks which she brought to sessions, and equally true in relation to those 'functional' texts she introduced. Most frequently, these texts were used to enhance comprehension of meaning, and to draw attention to links to her pupils' own experiences (Ludwig, 2003). Gina herself commented that the texts were chosen in an attempt to ascertain what the pupils will be 'dealing with in life', echoing Ludwig's (2013) characterisation of the text participant role as 'seeing own interests and lifestyles reflected in texts'.

However, Gina also - and this is chiefly due to her work within a meta-cognitive framework - integrated certain learning routines when introducing new texts, which address the text user, or pragmatic competence. It is worth revisiting Gina's description of a common opening sequence when introducing a new text: "when I start with a text I'll often be like, well why do we have it? What's it about? What's it going to teach us? Is it important that we have it? And kind of question the validity of the text and I'll get them to ask questions like what do they think this text is going to be about." Here Gina evoked the pragmatic resources which enable pupils to understand social context and purpose, recognising 'what others might do with it' (Ludwig, 2003). Gina believed strongly that these questions would only be meaningful for her pupils if they related to texts over which they hold a degree of 'ownership', as discussed above. This position sits comfortably with Freebody and Luke's (1990) four resources model, where they oppose a hierarchical view of the competencies (see also Serafini, 2012); and so, it is equally a mistake to see critical practices as being 'advanced or higher order cognitive skills' (Ludwig, 2003). Put simply, as advocated by the proponents of the four resources model, Gina tried to expand the pragmatic competencies of her pupils; this included addressing some of the complex social questions about texts, while sticking to textual 'levels' which she felt they could access.

In her work, Gina addressed both the semantic, meaning-making, and the pragmatic socially-informed capabilities of her pupils. Her chosen text was an interesting case in hand. In her interview she shared the work she did around a London Underground Map. Ostensibly, this was a multi-modal, 'functional' text, which was chosen because the pupil in question had some familiarity with it and, as Gina put it "had an idea that this would stop her from getting lost; that it would help her navigate around". She also framed her choice in terms of curricular priorities, namely: enhancing vocabulary and orientation (for a discussion on *orientation in space* as a cognitive set of skills see Feuerstein and Jensen, 1980). The work around this text

straddled both the text participant and text user roles: they worked on the comprehension elements of the text focussing on semantic capacities, for example deciphering vocabulary ("words like platform she didn't have"), and wider concepts such as northbound and southbound. Work was also done on pragmatic capacities, making the links to explicitly expose the purposes and social context of such a document, as expressed in her pupil's desire to 'navigate around'. However, Gina expressed significant doubt as to whether her pupil would in fact be able to become a full text user: those elements of both transferring classroom knowledge to out-of-school contexts, and fostering a confidence in the real-life 'literacy events' were in serious doubt. Gina commented: "the reality is that I don't think she could ever do anything with that knowledge, sadly, because I think if you're actually in that environment it's extremely different, like being able to read what platform number you need to go to and follow the directions and signs and being able to take everything in. I think that would be really overwhelming for her." In fact, the Underground map, despite having a clear link to the functional aspects of literacy, and to the set of pragmatic capacities, was in essence used for in-class instruction. The difficulty Gina identified in transferring this learning to an out-of-school context is based on both her pupils' emotional state and self-confidence, and the cultural facet of her pupil's life, as a member of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. It was in this context that she questioned the possibility of her pupil having the opportunity to travel independently.

Most of the literacy activities Orna described fall under the text participant / semantic practice set of resources. These include, in broad terms, activities which require pupils to display their understanding of meaning in a variety of chosen texts. The emphasis Freebody and Luke (1990) placed on pupils 'having and using their background knowledge' is mirrored in Orna's deliberations about suitability of her chosen texts to the cultural/religious context within which she teaches. These activities include working on past papers, particularly sets of closed, multiple-choice questions; writing letters according to given briefs; and responding to questions about Orna's 'functional' texts.

There is another aspect of Orna's work which seeks to develop her pupils' pragmatic competence: she expanded upon the social significance of these same types of texts and the ability to appreciate their place in an out-of-school context. It is also about showing pupils how particular forms of appropriate literacy activities look: "I explain to them that they need to read a recipe and they need to read the community paper that has all the adverts in it and I say things

like ‘In a few years’ time you need to make chocolate fruit cake for a friend’s *Kiddush* (blessing ceremony) for their baby and you need to read the recipe book and this is really exciting and really important’ and that’s what we’re aiming for, or ‘Next time you go shopping with your friends for clothes, you need to know what are the best deals and where the sales are going to be and you will be able to say ‘No, we’re not going to that we’re going to this one”… In this quotation Orna in effect *demonstrated* how acceptable literacy would look.

This push to expand the pragmatic competence of her pupils took on another form, when she reported that it was her pupils who led the effort. Orna reported that her pupils savoured the ‘formal’ appearance of the FSQ exam papers; that this allowed them to feel on a par with their peers, who were “in the zone of doing their GCSEs”. Orna, in return, provided tuition, as in the case of one particular pupil: “tutoring in how to do it and how to approach it and how to answer it and even the placement of… she would read this question but then she’d answer the next question by mistake and put it in the wrong place”. Orna, then, enabled her pupils to recognise the particular ‘structure and features’ of a FSQ exam paper (Ludwig, 2003). She also identified this interest in the appearance of the material as an opportunity to increase motivation, much as Luke and Freebody (1999) noted that the literate repertoire employed in classrooms will have impact on pupil motivation.

The cultural story:

Gina and Orna teach the FSQ within schools in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. For both, the main characterisation of their pupils was their SEN profile. However, some of the reflections on their pupils’ social-religious background did convey a social slant on literacy education, with direct consequences to curricular design and the functional approach. Firstly, reflecting on the concept of cultural literacy, Gina commented that what is typically considered the cultural canon (quoting Macbeth) wouldn’t be considered of any cultural import in that learning context. In her comments to me after reading my initial narrative account of the interview, Gina wanted to stress that this differs from her approach to ‘mainstream’ pupils. She wrote that she wanted ‘to contextualize; I am talking about SEN-ultra-orthodox studying English as opposed to mainstream’. The place of English as a spoken, written and functional language in the Jewish ultra-orthodox community is complex (Glinert, 1999). Gina herself commented that it is sometimes unclear what functions English fulfils in the life of her pupils (often a third language alongside Yiddish and Hebrew).

Gina also wished to further explain her choice of texts in her commentary on my narrative account. This commentary was in essence cultural: “Interests and hobbies as far as I can tell are not encouraged (based purely on the conversations with the students I teach), so a football match programme from a London derby would not interest students here as it may do in a mainstream setting. Fantasy (i.e. Peter Pan) is another level of challenge as there isn't a concept of magic and fictional extra-ordinary experience.” Further to that, and responding to my interpretation of her term ‘ownership’, Gina wrote: “I think my students feel that they are not the intended audience of many English texts. They have never been told that the ideas, expressions, characters, plot etc. that texts convey belong to them. They do not recognise that they can own the texts. I think they are more likely to feel some 'ownership' with Kodesh (religious) texts.” And so, beyond the active choice of following the ‘functional’ route for literacy texts, it appears that an element of exclusion was in play where cultural factors meant that texts which Gina felt would have been useful in other contexts were here either excluded on grounds of irrelevance or did not have the kind of cultural appeal she was looking for.

A final point on the cultural challenges Gina described is an example of what Street (1984) saw as discrete literacy ‘types’. As Street argued, what counts as suitable literacy practices is socially-informed; specifically, the concept of *literacy practices* (Hamilton and Barton, 2005; Street, 2003) sheds light on the ways in which individual literacy events – such as filling in a form – are best understood in the context of the ‘everyday uses and meanings of literacy’. Even functionality in literacy is in fact socially-informed (Freebody, 1992). Gina faced this challenge when she brought in to session some forms which fell comfortably under the banner of ‘functional’ texts. But, rather than engaging with the message of immediate relevance to their lives, her pupils contended that ‘well, we just call someone, we don't fill in a form’. This throws up a series of questions regarding the level and nature of interaction between young women in the ultra - orthodox community and non-Jewish, English-speaking society. While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore these questions, which are clearly politically contentious, in greater depth, they are most important to consider when devising an English literacy curriculum. Gina herself commented after she read my narrative analysis, that the process did indeed encourage her to reconsider her learning aims, and what it means to be functionally literate in the contexts in which her pupils live. Similarly, Orna was acutely aware of the material-social implications of her textual choices: for example, her decision to work with

health-related forms, for example, was based upon the realities of marriage, domesticity and the role of women in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community.

Gina and Orna: cultural and functional literacies in the Orthodox Jewish community

In this short reflection on the two accounts above, I will refer to two salient implications for our understanding of literacy, which flow from the participants' reflections on the social context within which they were working.

The first point to make is perhaps an obvious one: in a community which doesn't share wider society's linguistic, religious and cultural features and values, it is unlikely that there would be an acceptance of the same texts as 'canon' (Altieri, 1983; Guillory, 2013). Both teachers were acutely aware that what would typically count as culturally valuable (or, of value in terms of cultural capital (Guillory, 2013; Bourdieu, 1986)), did not do so in this context. Gina spoke about this in relation to choosing textual materials, suggesting that if she was to attempt to work within the cultural literacy paradigm with these pupils, she wouldn't be equipped to do so. She contrasted the Orthodox Jewish school within which she was working with non-religious schools, claiming that in the former it would be texts such as a 'parable from the Talmud' rather than Shakespeare which would hold value. Gina went on to make some profound comments about cultural realities and textual practices within the community; claiming that the concepts of 'hobby' and free time didn't hold the same kind of currency as elsewhere; that 'fantasy' in literary terms wasn't used outside of scripture. These claims are surely worth examining, but go significantly beyond the scope of this study. They are, however, indicative of the way literacy teachers are called upon to make complex and nuanced judgements about the culture in which they work in order to effectively and appropriately design literacy curricula. Gina, for her part, stated she would have loved to work on such types of texts with her pupils, but that the cultural factors made this, to her mind, impossible. Orna considered the cultural paradigm for slightly different reasons; it was the absence of 'beauty' in the FSQ that she wished to address. Like Gina, Orna realised that she would have to carefully consider which texts might suitably introduce the 'beauty' element into her sessions. At the time of our interview, Orna had not yet done so, but she did earmark a couple of possible choices, putting them both into the specific cultural-religious context. What is clear from both accounts is that even if these two teachers were to include literary content in their sessions, the texts considered for such

lessons would almost certainly not hold the same kind of cultural currency as those typically taught in the English GCSE curriculum.

A second aspect of teaching literacy in this context questions the neutrality of the concept of literacy functionality. Gina's textual example of an Underground map is a case in point: while it is difficult to argue that by most accounts, this text would be considered a functional one, moving between the semantic and pragmatic competencies, Gina testified that it was questionable if her pupil would indeed be able to master the latter. This was because of her 'becoming overwhelmed' in the social situation of 'acting on the text'. In other words, in the social context (and the SEN context), Gina felt her pupil was unlikely to independently traverse this 'literacy event' anyway. Another example of the fluidity of the concept of functionality came when Gina shared an anecdote about an attempt to reinforce the exact same notion of functionality to her pupils, about filling out a form. The response was that in their cultural context, the pupils felt they wouldn't 'in real life' be likely to do this, claiming that someone else would do it for them, or they would simply speak to someone over the phone. This is also beyond the scope of this study, but these scenarios point both to the different ways in which the individual in the Orthodox Jewish community interacts with bureaucracy, and possibly to the social role of young women within the community. Similarly, when Orna made choices about textual activities which were meant to be 'functional', there is an obvious difference from the type of examples one would usually come across in the FSQ policy papers, which emphasise preparation for employment. Orna's choices were all within the realm of domesticity, as were her motivational explanations to her pupils (in the context of fostering pragmatic competencies). For example, recounting the way she encouraged her pupils to read a recipe by suggesting a likely scenario where they will need to bake a cake for a religious ritual. In her interview Orna gave explicit recognition of this, claiming that she is aware that communal conventions mean that her pupils are likely to be married by the age of 18-19, become full-time carers and have predominantly domestic roles. It was this realisation which dictated Orna's textual choices.

Marilyn and Melissa: two approaches to perceived limitations of the FSQ

Marilyn and Melissa taught the FSQ programme in a Jewish secondary school, to year groups 9 and 10. Their accounts are brought together, since they demonstrate different approaches to reconciling the tension between valuing the functional approach to literacy as a productive route for their pupils, and the sense that there is a lack of ambition, or 'stretch' (DfE, 2011) in the textual content it offers. The concern over lack of stretch relates to the pedagogical importance of texts with a degree of 'distance', or unfamiliarity to pupils, as well as the social importance of those associated with cultural and educational capital.

Marilyn: *a rounded idea of English*

Marilyn began teaching 25 years ago. She qualified as a science teacher and taught in a mainstream school for twelve years. Following the birth of her children, she worked at a day centre, which "promoted my interest in working with special needs". She went on to teach IT in a Further Education college to pupils with SEN, and eventually joined the specialist teaching service, where she taught Functional Skills and other "basic learning" for nine years.

Marilyn's first impressions of the FSQ were very positive: "I actually think the Functional Skills qualification is a good excellent qualification. It gives students who are not academically able to pass the rigours of GCSE to attain a qualification which is nationally recognised. I also could make students feel that it was something that would be relevant in the future, i.e. in everyday life." Like others, Marilyn mentioned activities like letter writing, which seem to hold a special place within the explanations of teachers of the functional paradigm. Being trained as a science teacher, she also commented that taking up English teaching "made me understand where students were having their issues so that was quite helpful", pointing to the cross-curricular nature of literacy.

Marilyn explained the purpose of teaching English in school in academic terms; "Hopefully it will spin on, it will help their other GCSE subjects like if they're doing History or things like that for English in particular. In their essay writing, we do a lot of planning and techniques which is quite important and that's something I really try and underline that we're not just teaching a content that it's actually a skill set that they're trying to build up". She also highlighted the work-credential and future prospect aspects of literacy: "Well being able to

understand and respond to written information and be able to read something and take it in and be able to respond to it appropriately or deal with that; be able to confidently write legibly and with an organised manner". I noticed, that Marilyn used the term 'confident' a number of times. She mentioned, for example, at one point, "things that they will come across in the future, be able to express themselves more confident in using everyday English so they're not fazed by these things." Here I felt she was alluding to a wider, social, aspect of literacy – where literacy skills have much more than a direct academic function, but also have the potential to bestow emotional confidence, a sense of preparedness – not ending up 'being fazed' by what they might encounter in the world of work. The aspect of confidence features prominently in Marilyn's accounts of teaching SEN pupils, and thus also features in the way she conceptualized the purpose of her work, in what sounded like a guiding ethos: "They're historically students that have got to Year 9, 10 and 11 and have consistently been failed through the system and are quite demoralised so the biggest thing is to try and show them what they can do rather than what they can't."

Marilyn tended to make medium-term curriculum planning which is centred on a theme. She used online resources and had in the past used the FSQ textbooks. This point brought to the fore an issue which disturbed her: "I think it's to do with the level of reading; it's got to be accessible but it doesn't inspire the imagination. They tend to be very factual based things; very rarely imaginative; very, very little imagination which that's what engages students, something that makes them think." At that point of the interview, I introduced the concept of cultural literacy, and asked Marilyn how she felt that this might be relevant to the school setting she worked in. She contended that this was a very relevant framework to consider in relation to the 'mainstream classes' (i.e. the English GCSE), but *not* the FSQ: "In the mainstream English they will do the more cultural literacy that you're talking about. Functional Skills as I said stays way away from anything like that, it's deemed too difficult for the students." This concerned Marilyn. Firstly, she felt that her pupils weren't being stretched enough: "I think there is a place for doing different things and not always doing something they know about". Secondly, she evoked the idea that using solely 'functional' texts in English is limiting: "I think this whole imagination, what you get from a piece of poetry, this interpretation"… It was only when reading the interview transcript that I noticed that she didn't complete the sentence. But the general sentiment is clear: pupils who are not given the opportunity to read fiction are definitely limited.

Marilyn tried to set out for me the main difficulties her pupils faced as she saw it. She spoke for example about a reading comprehension task: "You give them a comprehension for example and they find it very difficult to skim read and use these skills because they have to struggle to read it in the first place if they've got dyslexia etc. so they've got to struggle to read it then they've got that next level to understand it and then when they've fought all the way through, they've then got to do the work whereas other students will be straight in there." Marilyn was very awake to the educational disadvantage her pupils faced, and repeatedly returned to the theme of confidence, or the lack of it: "they still tend to put a ceiling on themselves because they have failed all the way through."

Marilyn's sample text addressed this problematic with the functional literacy paradigm. "We're looking at murders based around Sherlock Holmes text and I've been working with the Year 9 on that and doing things linked to that so looking at the historical language, genres and that sort of thing; trying to get a more rounded idea of English as well as working towards the Functional Skills qualification." Marilyn told me that she felt the lessons around Sherlock Holmes went further than the particulars of content or skill; in fact, she felt that she began to change her pupils' attitudes to reading in general: "lots of these students, people imagine can't do English, hate reading. It's not true. Many of them might not read but they still do enjoy reading if they find something that engages them so that was something. So I found the Sherlock Holmes all students said and what was quite remarkable was I took a set of different genres of books in one lesson as an opener and all the students including the most negative students that I taught wanted 'Oh I read this book. I remember it' or they had positive feelings back of all these different books which was really nice to see that they have had even though they hated English in inverted commas so that was a really interesting reaction…It was really positive." Marilyn hoped that this created a real change; she told me about a conversation with one pupil who expressed interest, to whom she responded: 'it's in the library, you can borrow it'. Marilyn didn't know if the pupil actually took up her suggestion, but she *did* feel that this development, this conversation, "was very exciting".

Melissa: ***To understand what's going on in life***

Melissa began teaching fifteen years ago, as an unqualified teacher, and from the outset had a particular interest in special needs: "I started off by teaching… helping out in a school and realised that there were a lot of students there with learning difficulties that needed help and I enjoyed helping them so then I went into teaching". She completed a teaching qualification and followed this up with a specialist qualification in teaching maths. She worked in a primary school, and then moved into a Further Education college, where "some had come from backgrounds where they had been bunking school and missed things; some had genuine learning difficulties and they were doing vocational courses, so I was teaching Functional Skills under those vocational courses." From there, she joined our teaching service and worked in it for six years.

Melissa began teaching the FSQ in the FE College, and her first impressions of it were positive, echoing the explicit focus expressed by the DfE on 'real-world situations'. She also saw an advantage in the way it allowed an easy integration of English and maths teaching. This approach tallied with Melissa's understanding of the purpose of literacy instruction: "I think it teaches them…their life skills. Everything in everyday living you need to be able to read… So I think things like that, all that is English and I think just generally every day to understand what's going on in life, to make an appointment to go and see the doctor, you need to sometimes fill in forms and I think the students that I teach, because I'm teaching Functional Skills to people with learning difficulties, I'm concentrating more on their everyday life and teaching them English that they will need in their everyday world." Melissa's examples of the significance of literacy instruction were functional, and mundane: bus stops, shops, labels on packaging. Her description of literacy as she taught it was markedly different from 'academic' English which was conceptualized as closer to her own experience as a pupil: "I went to a grammar school anyway which was an academic school and it was much more looking at texts. I don't think it's as interesting as the way we teach today. It was much more reading Shakespeare and understanding the plays and reading novels and poetry which was interesting, but it wasn't taught in an interesting way; it wasn't brought to life like education is today…I don't think we ever studied any texts that were relevant to our lives at the time. It was all novels and Shakespeare and poetry which was nothing that was relevant … to our lives at the time." Melissa commented that she did on occasion try to engage her pupils with literature, but this wasn't successful. She cited two main obstacles: her pupils' difficulties in understanding,

reading, and retaining information; and their reluctance to engage with anything which didn't seem to be directly relevant to their lives.

This latter point served to focus Melissa's literacy practices and curricular choices: she explained that she felt it was important to bring current affairs texts into the classroom. She felt this approach was fruitful, despite the initial reluctance as described above, "sometimes students you didn't think would be interested were suddenly would pick up on a point and you'd end up with having very good discussions and sometimes something had happened in the world, I would always bring that into a lesson." Once again, Melissa's perception was that the ability and inclination to engage with these 'current affairs' texts was a particular challenge for SEN pupils; it was therefore a particular focus of her work to try to remedy this.

Melissa also emphasised the conversational facets of literacy to which she assigned social, and job-credential importance: "I think that we teach them in a practical way so that they can lead a more fulfilling life like teaching them English so that they can go out and talk to people because another part of Functional Skills English is also the speaking and listening so it's not just the reading and writing so basically teach them to talk and have a proper discussion teaching them to listen and to take turns in having discussion and I think that is a very important life skills. For example if they're going for a job interview, they've got to talk about themselves but then they've also got to listen to the questions that people are asking them so I think that's very important."

Despite Melissa's functional approach to literacy, and the notion that her pupils didn't relate to literary texts, she shared a curricular story describing a very successful creative writing session: "some of them did surprise us and some of them were far more imaginative than I thought. We obviously tried to concentrate more on the creativity rather than the grammar and the spelling and some of them did surprise me and were quite creative with their writing which was very good."

The text Melissa gave as an example of a successful source text was an article about the TV series Blue Planet. It brought together her main foci of conversational skills and topical content: "I chose a text about the Blue Planet which… I think everyone seems to be talking about and I know from my own experience, I've been watching the programmes and I love them and I found them very interesting and even my own children at home and even schools, people are

talking about it so I thought it was a good topic to use for an English class…It also promotes very good discussions, having something which is topical…One lesson might have been just reading the text and having a whole discussion about it, talking about the new words and what people thought about and often people have seen the programme so they can talk about the programme anyway. It wasn't just a piece of text. I felt for the students it was something real because they'd seen it on television or most of them had seen it on television and I had a couple of clips to show them so they could see it on television."

Melissa felt that she succeeded in identifying her pupils' most pressing literary needs, and responded with curricular textual choices. She felt that the FSQ was a valuable framework: "I do believe that it is the way forward even for students that are not necessarily special needs; it's just people that maybe they just want to get on in life. I think it's important to teach them practical skills and I feel that Functional Skills is a practical skill."

The literacy story: Marilyn spoke about literacy as a functional set of skills, where being literate is a condition of social participation. In her account, being literate was the condition for being able to 'respond appropriately' to literacy demands. While this account positions her pupils in a passive role, it does acknowledge the social aspects of literacy; further, Marilyn was clear that there is a link between her pupils' literacy ability and their 'confidence'. For Marilyn, literacy is also a key factor in pupils' educational lives, and explained that her aim was so help them succeed in other curricular subjects by working on 'generic' skills such as planning essay writing.

Marilyn expanded her vision of literacy when she contemplated a perceived weakness of the functional paradigm: here, she advocated the use of texts which can stimulate the imagination. I asked her to clarify her comments which remained unfinished in our interview. She expanded: "in relation to imaginary texts what I found was that students enjoyed being creative and working around ideas associated with imaginary ideas. This was either in writing their own pieces of creative writing such as a murder story or learning about fictional creatures in myths and legends." Marilyn believed there were two important aspects to this type of work: firstly, she related this to what can broadly be seen as a cultural literacy approach (Battenburg, 2018). Within this, pupils were learning about, for example, Greek mythology and Sherlock Holmes. Marilyn commented on the fact that they worked on 'old fashioned English' and this gave her pupils a 'more rounded' sense of the language, here echoing the cultural literacy paradigm, by

which "certain texts must be read and understood by all members of a group to produce shared experiences and points of reference" (Battenburg, 2018:17). The critiques of such an approach are well-known (Railton, 2015), and focus on the neutralization of a classed body of literary works, also referred to as the access dilemma (Schmidt, 2013), where providing access to 'dominant' literacies entrenches their privilege; and denying pupils' access to them, risks further marginalizing those pupils (see also Janks, 2010). Marilyn, however, was clear that vis-à-vis her SEN pupils, her role was to allow the same kind of access afforded to their peers: "Many teachers, although they differentiate their work schemes… there's a difference between differentiated to make it accessible and making it so easy almost like dumbing down… Just because they find things difficult because of their special needs, the reading doesn't mean they can't go through the thinking and I think that's ignored quite a lot."

Another aspect of Marilyn's work on fiction, 'creative', or 'imaginary' texts, seems to be related to her concern about her pupils' confidence: "These are students historically as I say who have failed all the way through; been bottom of the class in primary school; been in the lowest sector and they're treated… they still know 'We're the bottom' so to get them to feel some sort of growth but within English, to be able to do things that they will need in future." While in part Marilyn's point referred to the gap between the FSQ and the English GCSE, another aspect of this was her assessment that "creativity in any realm is important in many aspects of work and life... especially (for) those who have found literature and schooling/learning difficult". This point seems to tally with Lareau's (2003) notion of particular aspects of cultural capital which, when acquired in school, may foster pupils' access to middle class roles in society. This is a complex argument, which involves different strands of reproduction theory (see, for instance, Bowles and Gintis 2002; Golann, 2015); the broad point made by critical thinkers in particular, is that educational – and curricular – practices play a role in reproducing a stratified society. The particular 'cultural skills' (Anyon, 1980) in question here are "expression, independence, and negotiation", as well as creative confidence, as opposed to compliance, in relation to working-class pupils. To put this simply into the context of literacy instruction, as Luke (1998: 307) said, "literate competence is a kind of cultural capital". While I cannot exhaust this notion here, it seems striking that Marilyn appears to be drawing a parallel between the disparity of working-class and middle-class pupils as represented in much of the reproduction literature, and the difference between her pupils accessing the English FSQ, and the 'mainstream', GCSE pupils: "In the mainstream English

they will do the more cultural literacy that you're talking about. Functional Skills as I said stays way away from anything like that, it's deemed too difficult for the students."

Melissa conceptualised literacy in relation to her work in the specific context of working with SEN pupils. This conceptualisation was one that encompassed a traditional 'functional' approach ("it teaches them with their life skills"), in her evocation of doctors' surgeries, bus stops, labels and food packaging. Beyond these confined arenas of 'daily life' and preparation for work, Melissa saw literacy as a key factor in social participation. In this regard, she spoke about the Speaking and Listening element of the FSQ, but also more generally contested that "Functional Skills is not just about reading and writing; it's also about discussion and understanding and also relating it to their everyday life." This point about understanding and relating to the lives of her pupils was at the heart of Melissa's work: she felt that due to their SEN status they naturally had less inclination to engage with topics which were not 'directly' related to their personal lives. As she put it: "I think with the people with special needs, they like to have it relevant to their own lives whereas I think mainstream they can diverse a bit more." Her response was to try to mediate between pupils' natural curiosity and wider societal issues which might be relevant to them. This was, in the main, done by way of incorporating what she termed 'current affairs' into her lessons. The terms in which Melissa referred to this strand of work in her lessons brings to mind a conversation around citizenship education and pupils with learning difficulties (see Pavey, 2003; Lawson, 2003; Norwich, 2002) and arguably here literacy is articulated as being in the service of creating 'literate citizens' (Banks, 2003). In this context, the importance of equipping this student group with the tools for citizenry is considered in relation to the curricular and pedagogic challenges associated with, for example, working with abstract concepts where these "may be too difficult for some pupils to access meaningfully" (Lawson, 2003). Lawson (2003) goes on to name the elements of citizenship education highlighted by the QCA (2000) as the 'pillars' of content, and these, I think, comfortably align with Melissa's work: social and moral responsibility; community involvement; political literacy. Melissa spoke about the difference between her pupils and the 'mainstream' pupils, where the latter would "understand world politics and you can discuss that with them." She further demonstrated in her chosen text (an exploration of the TV series *Blue Planet*) that she was aiming at issues relating to the importance of 'socially and morally responsible behaviour' and of being 'helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhoods and communities' (QCA, 2000) which reflect the *social and moral responsibility* and *community involvement* strands respectably. It is notable, that as Lawson

(2003) and Pavey (2003) recognise, this type of instruction might in itself and of itself, ultimately appear as education towards compliance. The point here is that acquiring knowledge about social and political reality as it is, is not likely – without explicit *critical* work alongside it – to ensure that pupils are "having a say, a voice, a sense of agency, making a difference and having an effect on the world. It is about active participation." Melissa aimed to enable her pupils to participate in an already existing conversation. She saw their disadvantage as a result of their SEN, and success was when she brought to class "something that happened in the world", and consequently managed to generate her pupils' interest, and they would "end up with having very good discussions". It is worth mentioning that when I interviewed some of the very same pupils Melissa was referring to in my IFS study, I found that while they demonstrated the ability to make sophisticated generalised points about language and power, their grasp of political discourse was strikingly weak (for example, referring in the English context to 'the president'). It is the case, then, that their prospects are most likely improved by explicit instruction in this area.

Another type of literacy which Melissa acknowledged, which she called 'academic literacy' is in fact, broadly speaking, the traditional school English (Andrews, 2009), which placed emphasis on literary content: "It was much more reading Shakespeare and understanding the plays and reading novels and poetry". This was differentiated from her FSQ teaching on two counts: firstly, it related to her own personal experience as a pupil, in what she now considers an old-fashioned model of teaching. Secondly, Melissa had no doubt that this wasn't a suitable curricular framework for her pupils. In fact, she had tried it in the past, but 'found it didn't really work'. In essence, what appears to be represented here is the attitude that literary content, which Melissa termed 'mainstream' and 'academic', is an inappropriate distraction (echoing QCA's (2007) statement about "non-functional repetitive elements"). It is in this context that Melissa explained the suitability of the FSQ for those who "maybe they just want to get on in life".

A four Resources Analysis: Marilyn's emphasis in her sessions tended to be on the semantic practices, or the role of text participant; she often gave her pupils "comprehension to check understanding of texts", or "Story writing activity which I used as a planning technique and improving quality of writing", here echoing the four resources model's (Luke and Freebody, 1999) 'understanding and composing meaningful… texts'. Marilyn shared with me examples of such work: a short text and simple comprehension questions about Medusa and Athena, and

a planner for composing a story. It is worth noting, that Marilyn saw this also as part of an equity drive in relation to the 'mainstream' GCSE pupils: "This began as work on Greek myths and studying well-known myths to developing their own characters and learning to structure their own pieces of writing. It built on the FS of planning and organising ideas and writing in an interesting manner. It thus supported FS learning whilst stimulating the students' imagination. Previously the only creative writing was to use a picture as a source which is not tackled in FS curriculum."

Marilyn also acknowledged her pupils' need, notwithstanding their being in secondary school, in respect of the code breaker role (Freebody and Luke, 1990): "they can't access information. You give them a comprehension for example and they find it very difficult to skim read and use these skills because they have to struggle to read it in the first place if they've got dyslexia etc. so they've got to struggle to read it." This quotation shows that when addressing disadvantage, the focus in Marilyn's work is centred on the educational positioning and experiences of her pupils –including those literacy practices and experiences – relating to their SEN.

Marilyn's chosen text, the extract from Sherlock Holmes, and her emphasis as described above on using literary and 'creative' texts, involve an emphasis on the pragmatic competences, or text user role. While Marilyn was ostensibly engaging her pupils in the meaning-making and understanding as detailed above, her description of conversations and activities surrounding the 'main' activity (i.e. lesson opener, informal follow-up conversations) suggests another focus: encouraging, and inducting into the cultural skill and habit of reading for pleasure. Rush (2004: 38) presents the text user role as including "setting a purpose for reading, understanding different texts require different types of reading, knowing about…various cultural and social functions of texts". When describing her work on the Sherlock Holmes extract, Marilyn said: "So I found the Sherlock Holmes all students said and what was quite remarkable was I took a set of different genres of books in one lesson as an opener and all the students including the most negative students that I taught wanted 'Oh I read this book. I remember it' or they had positive feelings back of all these different books which was really nice to see that they have had even though they hated English in inverted commas so that was a really interesting reaction. One said 'I did this at primary school. It was a great book'. One of them said 'Oh I haven't seen this'." Here Marilyn initiated and encouraged what it 'looks like' to read for pleasure and converse about it in a social context. Once again Marilyn tied this agenda to the limitations of

the FSQ content, and the wider issue of 'dumbing down' the content for her pupils: "Because they're used to being presented with very simplified texts which aren't as interesting to read, they're not as fun and we actually had a very interesting conversation with the genres talking about films and books and things and we almost had like a debate about should you see the film before the book or the book before the film and they had quite strong feelings but again it engaged them which was quite interesting. And I said to them 'If you enjoy a film, go and have a look at the book and vice versa'." Thus, to my mind Marilyn's push towards the pragmatic competencies in relation to a higher level of cultural skills, by way of encouraging the social practice of reading for pleasure, is motivated by a particular, SEN-related, social justice agenda. Marilyn identified, as did Luke (1998: 306) that "the outcomes of literacy teaching continue to favour already advantaged groups" and set out to change these practices.

In much the same way like the other participants, Melissa seemed to focus in her sessions on the text participant and text user roles. The former reflected the strictly 'functional' aims of the FSQ, and were concerned with the ability to understand and respond to such texts, in a somewhat passive social sense. The latter represented Melissa's wish to broaden her pupils' interests and involved what she termed 'current affairs'. When working on such content areas, Melissa made justifications which go beyond the relationship between pupils' available knowledge and the texts' 'internal meanings' (Luke and Freebody, 1999). These justifications were about the ability for "participating in 'what this text is for, here and now'" (Freebody and Luke, 1990). Explaining her chosen text, Melissa said: "even my own children at home and even schools, people are talking about it" (the *Blue Planet* TV series); the social act of talking about a TV programme was the object of study here. As Rush (2004) points out, these kinds of out-of-school literacies are seldom valued, not to mention interrogated or taught, in schools.

Marilyn and Melissa: two ways of providing textual 'stretch'

Marilyn and Melissa both identified an inherent tension within the FSQ framework: it was, to their minds, a useful, practical, framework which they saw as a tool for promoting their pupils' life chances. On the other hand, the kind of textual materials usually associated with the qualification, didn't provide satisfactory 'stretch'. This stretch referred to access to unfamiliar, new content, the import of which reaches beyond the individual reader, as well as having access to literate practices with associated social-educational capital. Put another way, textual content which goes beyond the limitations of 'expectations of the work place' and 'everyday life' (DfE,

2018a). The way that Marilyn and Melissa each chose to respond to this tension, impacted their textual choices.

Marilyn and Melissa both saw the typical functional literacy textual materials such as those featuring in the exam-board endorsed textbooks, and indeed past exam papers, as unsatisfactory: Melissa referring to them as 'samey and a bit boring', and Marilyn expanding on the same notion, pointing out there was nothing 'inspiring' about these texts, that they offered nothing beyond what pupils were already familiar with, and that – much like Melissa's point – they were 'dry'. These reflections on textual materials were further substantiated by broader thinking about literacy: Marilyn identified an inequality in the way 'mainstream' pupils were inducted into 'academic' English – which for her designated literary content. In her conceptualisation, the lack of access to these literacy resources was compounding her pupils' low self-esteem. In Marilyn's conceptualisation, remedying this would have a positive impact both in respect of allowing her pupils a 'more rounded' sense of English with the social capital implications of this; and perhaps more directly, the drive to enable access to the 'mainstream' curriculum. This was, then, to a great degree, a question of *inclusion.* Her curricular response to this matter was, to adapt literary content to her pupils' attainment levels. She also, as demonstrated by the four resources analysis, attempted to induct her pupils into the *social practice* of reading for pleasure. Marilyn was clear that to her mind, true inclusion necessitates finding ways to give SEN pupils access to the curriculum and positioned herself firmly as an advocate of the social model of disability (Oliver, 2013). The application of models of disability to milder, 'invisible' forms of SEN is a complex task (Goodley, 2004) and is to an extent still under-theorised. However, as Riddick (2001) points out, applying the social model to impairments such as dyslexia (which is explicitly mentioned by Marilyn as a typical phenomenon in her classes), is useful when considering the disadvantages faced by pupils so labelled. It requires considering the literacy 'standards' and expectations which govern much of school-based literacy practices. Marilyn's approach combines an insistence that her SEN pupils have a degree of curricular equivalence with their peers, while demonstrating significant flexibility in the design of tasks, sessions, and literacy expectations. And so, Marilyn spoke about choosing literary, at times linguistically complicated, texts to address these issues.

Melissa shared Marilyn's general understanding that the functional literacy as presented in the FSQ framework was quite distinct from what they both termed 'academic' English. Melissa related how she became aware of a challenge when trying to introduce textual content to her

pupils which they saw as not being 'relevant to their own lives'. She reinforced this notion with an anecdote reporting pupils' claims that 'it doesn't make any difference to my life'. This phenomenon was reported in very similar terms by another interviewee, Noa (see Appendix 6), who told of how "A lot of them are very… egocentric, their whole world was themselves… they're the epicentre of their own universe, so they didn't really understand anything that was talking about anyone else". To Noa, like Melissa, this was associated with these pupils' special needs. Unlike Marilyn, Melissa judged that her attempts to introduce literary content were unsuccessful. Instead, she chose to focus on trying to encourage her pupils' interest in those texts which ostensibly 'don't make any difference' to their lives. Here again there was a dual purpose: firstly, she was hoping to instil in her pupils a sense that 'current affairs' do have relevance to their lives. Secondly, she was aiming to equip them with the literacy tools to participate in a 'social conversation'. Consequently, her textual choices centred on news articles and media multi-modal texts such as the *Blue Planet* series of lessons.

Chapter 5: Discussion, avenues for further research, and concluding thoughts

The challenges of eliciting teachers' views of 'what constitutes English teaching' have been commented upon elsewhere (Marshall, 2000), and feature in my methodology chapter. At the opening of this section, however, it is useful to acknowledge again that the findings presented here were 'mined' out of a process inviting teachers' accounts, narrating them, and finally analysing them according to pre-set broad areas of interest to my research. Certainly, during the process of co-producing the narratives and analyses, participants expressed largely positive attitudes to thinking explicitly about these matters. What was clear from these comments, though, was that hitherto such explicit thinking didn't take place.

- **1. Research question 1: Which types of literacies are privileged in the Functional Skills curriculum? Does this privileging align with teachers' conceptualisations of literacy teaching (e.g. teachers' beliefs about the purpose of literacy teaching)?**

  In the interviews, participant teachers were asked, how they would define literacy, or 'being literate'; what 'type' of literacy do they think the FSQ promotes; and how they would describe the purpose of teaching literacy in schools. Participants shared a multi-faceted understanding of literacy. The main fault lines run between literacy as they taught it to their 'SEN pupils' as part of the FSQ, and the 'mainstream' GCSE-led teaching which runs in parallel in the same schools; and between the FSQ literacy and their own learning experiences. The latter was often referred to as 'academic' English, which I would designate as the more traditional 'school English'. As I have stated earlier in this study, this fault line is not to be seen as one which denies 'mainstream' English of its own internal contestations: as Doecke et al. (2019) point out, the work of any English teacher is 'ideological work'. Below I set out a more nuanced account of these conceptualisations in relation to the literacy paradigms presented in my literature review.

  1. a. **Functional Literacy:** not surprisingly, all participants presented a functional approach to literacy when they considered the purposes of their teaching. This was particularly accentuated when they spoke about the way they perceived literate expectations of their pupils. In fact, many teachers (unintentionally, I believe), used terms from the FSQ DfE documentation: the terms 'everyday life'; 'real skills'; 'basic skills'; 'life skills', all featured in their accounts. This idea related to two separate assumptions: firstly, participants seemed to accept at face value the 'common sense' argument of the functional paradigm; namely, that

there is merit in explicitly preparing pupils for the literate practices of community, adult and working life. Secondly, this same paradigm was reinforced by the perceived vulnerability of their pupils, due to their SEN status. That is, participants generally felt that the need to explicitly teach these skills set their pupils apart from their 'non-SEN' peers. In this regard, it was simply a coincidence that the FSQ was available as a framework to adopt, though it wasn't originally designed to serve pupils with SEN.

It is worthwhile highlighting the positive attributes the participants assigned to the functional approach offered by the FSQ. From a practice point of view, the teachers all recognised a link between the level of 'immediacy' of a text to a pupil, and levels of interest and motivation in studying it. Many of the textual practices which featured in the participants' description of activities can easily be justified in respect of potential pupils' questions such as 'what differences will this make to my life?' as one of Melissa's pupils asked. It is also the case that all the participants showed a degree of concern for their pupils which often related to their special needs. They consequently had an intuitive bias towards a framework which went some way towards addressing some of these perceived vulnerabilities; these often chimed with the kind of language and textual materials found in the FSQ policy and guidelines. Teachers worried about their pupils' prospects of living fulfilling, independent lives. The FSQ Equality Impact Assessment Document (DfE, 2018c) sets out the qualification's aim to "secure basic literacy and numeracy skills and to help people function effectively in work, life and study". Examples of this are found in the participants' many accounts of replicating, for example, filling out official governmental forms and textual expectations when sitting exams, going shopping or visiting a clinic. Gina, for example, spoke of using medicine packets as textual content (interestingly, Gee (1991) uses a medicine bottle as an exemplar of value-laden language guised as obvious, or 'common-sense' in what he calls 'the aspirin bottle problem').

The job-credentials aspect was also widely accepted as a positive attribute of the FSQ. Composing CVs and job applications are good examples of literacy activities which repeatedly appear in participants' accounts, featuring explicitly in five of the interviews.

However, the functional paradigm seems at the same time to represent an inherent tension. Many of the participants (Liam being the one clear exception to this), expressed some worry about the *limited* scope of the functional approach to teaching literacy. This was often provoked by a comparison of participants' own learning experiences with those of their pupils. I put an

accent on limited because I would like to use it to designate a programme which is limited in a broad sense. It is limited in its curriculum breadth, textual repertoire, and social ambition. And it is suspect, therefore, of being limiting in its offer to pupils; that is, limiting their curricular, textual and social choices and opportunities. The sections below detailing participants' work on cultural literacy and their accent on other social forms of literacy are their responses to a perceived lack. In the narrative accounts, different aspects of this deficit feature: a lack of 'beauty'; a lack of intellectual 'stretch'; a lack in contribution to "the spirit of the human being". All these sentiments drew differing conclusions as to the role of literacy teaching, and different curricular responses. Arguably, though, what they all share is the notion that literacy instruction for pupils designated as SEN is shackled by a "narrative of pessimism" (Kliewer et al., 2006). While possibly thinking of pupils with higher levels of need, Keefe and Copeland (2011), express a similar concern that adopting a functional approach to literacy instruction to these pupils "does not teach students literacy skills that might allow a broader and richer range of literacy experiences".

A second weakness of the functional literacy paradigm relates to the presumption of functionality itself.

In his discussion of literacy instruction in 'New Times', Luke (1998) points to the risks of stagnant practice when making curricular choices of texts. Specifically, he points to the risks of teaching forms of reading and writing that "don't have much purchase or power"; one particular risk factor in this regard is the uncritical insistence on "post-and-inter war industrial print literacies". Luke goes on to posit that these practices prepare for "life pathways that either are obsolete or no longer exist". Luke's 'New Times' now dates back over twenty years, so it is probably fair to assume that substantial changes have affected our societies since then. The point at hand is all the more relevant; that conceptualising literacy as an 'a-historical skill set' is misguided. These thoughts came to mind when, time and again, I came across an emphasis on letter-writing as a rudimentary literate skill in participants' accounts. It was always set out as a fundamental, basic skill sitting comfortably among the 'functional' assemblage of practices. Orna did comment, in passing, that she worked on this activity "even though we don't write letters anymore", and Gina also remarked that "it's not today's world anymore because everything is phones", but notwithstanding these comments, formal letter writing featured in most of the accounts, and indeed features in practically all the exam board-endorsed text books as an elementary functional skill (e.g. CGP, 2016; Edexcel, 2010). While in itself it is not inconceivable that year 10 pupils in London of 2017 might be required to write a formal letter at some point in their adult life, placing this particular practice in a prominent position

does appear to be out-of-step with current 'real life' practices. In light of the ever increasing rate of technological progress and its literacy implications (Oxenham, 2017), the unchallenged orthodoxy of letter-writing activities in the functional literacy classroom appear somewhat archaic.

A second cause to view the concept of functionality in literacy as problematic relates to its apparent socially-situated nature, which is not reflected in any way in the FSQ policy documents, nor in the accompanying textbooks. This issue can be seen clearly in the stories of Orna and Gina, working in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. They both presented this problematic through anecdotes of textual activities: Gina commenting that her pupils perceived some of the 'functional' texts she brought to class as redundant to their social context; Orna feeling the need to shift the 'functional' emphasis from work-place literacy to domestic literacy competencies. To my mind, both teachers did well in adapting the curricular choices and so effectively created a refined, nuanced 'version' of functionality. It is striking though, that educational policy does not recognise this socially-situated nature of literate functionality, claiming simply that the FSQ aims to enable pupils to "apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and in other real life situations" (DfE, 2018a). In the context of ultra-orthodox young Jewish women, the primacy of employment preparation is called into question; and as hyperbolic as this might appear, equally the meaning of 'real life situations' as presented in the policy does not seem appropriate to this particular social context.

1.b. **Cultural literacy:**

When teachers are charged with teaching SEN pupils literacy, they will need to fulfil two salient requirements in relation to the cultural literacy paradigm: familiarizing pupils with a body of 'canonical knowledge' which is assumed; and making this content accessible in relation to literacy 'deficits' which pupils might present. One of the tools Hirsch et al. (1993; 2002) use to enable access to this national conversation is the Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, which puts forward a list of entries which are to function as 'shared meanings'. The writers describe them as 'essential for reading'. In the Dictionaries, the editors repeat the assertion first expressed by Hirsch (1983) in his seminal work *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, that cultural literacy makes claims based on linguistics and cognitive psychology; put simply, that successful reading cannot be carried out when readers lack the 'core' knowledge gestured towards in his work. Literature linking the concept of cultural literacy and SEN is not widespread (see Artiles and Klinger, 2006). Often, it tends to be

practice-orientated, offering advice on addressing the particular needs of SEN students in the context of literature study (Greenspan et al., 1998; Brown, 2003; Gardill and Jitendra, 1999).

The ideas which the participants expressed regarding the cultural paradigm of literacy education encompass two main elements, which are captured in Knoblauch's (1990) outline: an awareness of 'cultural heritage' (as in Hirsch, 1983), and an 'aesthetic discernment' (see also Keefe and Copeland, 2011). The notion of cultural heritage, associated with cultural capital, came across most forcefully in Marilyn's account, when she spoke about affording her pupils a 'more rounded' understanding of English, including a familiarity with 'old fashioned' English and registers typically used in literary contexts. Other participants equally acknowledged the importance of such texts, but cited systemic challenges such as time and results pressure as barriers. The different approaches Marilyn and Melissa took to literary texts highlighted the impact of adopting a social model of understanding SEN in relation to particular literacy activities as Marilyn did (for a discussion of such an approach in the case of dyslexia see Riddick, 2001).

In relation to the 'aesthetic discernment' mentioned above, there was some recognition that in functional texts "there is no beauty". This was presented as a paucity potentially compromising the ability to foster emotional development. In addition, a more allusive benefit of such texts, the prospect of 'reaching' parts of one's self (in Orna's terms, 'soul'; Sam referred to 'the spirit of the human being') was expressed. These sentiments could be seen as an example of teachers looking for a way to engage their pupils with "significant existential problems" (Greene, 1965). A number of the accounts present teachers striving to elicit pupils' engagement, or as Greene put it (1965), using literature to "reflect upon what they have felt and seen". Certainly, they share the proposition that literary content extends one's educational 'reach' beyond that which is available in non-literary (in this case, 'functional') texts. What is perhaps even more obvious is that the precise same 'reach' can be seen as a rejection of the 'daily life' approach promoted by the FSQ.

1.c. **Literacy as social practice:** participants' accounts of what literacy is, and how they understand it in relation to the teaching they carry out, exposed both the autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Street, 1984), though ostensibly the two are at odds at a fundamental level. This ambivalence mirrors the attitudes presented above regarding the functional paradigm of literacy. In fact, it could be argued that the functional approach to

literacy fits very comfortably within an autonomous model: it treats literacy as a 'skill' set; it presents literacy as having inherent benefits to individuals and cultures adopting it; and, most importantly, it treats literacy as "the same, uniform thing" (Street, 1997) across contexts. Thus, most participants in this study presented a view by which the literacy as taught in the FSQ was autonomous. A good example of this attitude was Orna explaining how she aimed to equip her pupil with the skill needed to complete a form when visiting the doctor's surgery. Explaining her understanding of the term literate, Orna said: "be able to read and write in order to function in the world", to which NLS adherents would likely respond by contesting the existence of a 'neutral', universal (a-historical) phenomenon of literacy. But then Orna went on to mention one of the inherent social facets of literacy, citing the importance of *sounding* literate, bringing to mind Williams' observation (2001) that the "importance of speech as a class indicator is not likely to be underestimated by anyone who has lived in England". The teachers interviewed in this study put forward ideas that, notwithstanding their partial endorsement of the functional-autonomous approach, highlight two salient points in the 'ideological' model. Firstly, that literacy "varies with social context and with cultural norms and discourses" (Street, 1997: 48), i.e., one should accept a plurality of literacies (Roswell and Walsh, 2011). Secondly, as Street (1997) put it, the uses and meanings of literacy are "always embedded in relations of power". Though not explicitly couched in such terms, the participants' accounts offer a variety of such examples. The implications of the way teachers assess literacy in respect of the autonomous / ideological divide is usefully considered in light of the accounts of Liam and Sam.

It is finally worthwhile referring back to the work which Gina and Orna carried out in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. As discussed above, they both came to the realisation that what is considered to be literate, and appropriate literate practices, is socially informed. This played out in their textual choices: the use of recipes in Orna's case is a powerful example of the links between social context and what might be considered valuable literacy. The particular cultural context of their work might also be seen as an example of the way "written forms are adapted to oral practice rather than radically changing it" (Street, 1984).

Most of the teachers who took part in my study appear to have concluded that while there is strong justification to include a functionally-orientated approach in their teaching, it is also the case that literacy cannot be seen as an a-social skill set.

2. Research question 2: What types of texts (as source material) are seen as important in the instruction of literacy by SEN teachers? How do teachers go about curricular design of the English FSQ sessions?

Setting out the context is crucial to understanding teachers' curricular choices in this study. Firstly, the FSQ does not stipulate the use of specific texts, rather text types. Within that, priority is given to "advertisements, articles, blogs, leaflets, letters, manuals, text books, transcripts, web comments" (Pearson, 2017). It is indeed the case, that all participants in this study employed some of these text types, often citing their prominence in the FSQ exams as the main reason for their inclusion. However, this study also uncovered wide variations, which merit contemplation. The justifications for these variations are explored in the previous section, setting out, for example, how Marilyn chose to encompass literary content in her classes to address a perceived disadvantage. Another contextual factor to keep in mind is that the participants in this study were not employed by the schools in which they taught; as members of 'specialist external providers', their curricular guidance was always associated with SEN pedagogies. I argue that this combination of facts allowed teachers a degree of freedom in their textual choices.

Taking a broader view of the reasons for the textual variations apparent in this study – which include Underground maps, recipes, TV documentaries and Greek Mythology – allows us to theorise about the relationship between the literacy policy the FSQ enacts, and daily educational practice. The Pearson (2017: 6) guidance document referred to above, for example, states that in the FSQ exams, "Each paper allows learners to read and respond to a real-world scenario which is accessible and familiar." This is a typical statement in the FSQ policy assemblage, and is echoed by similar phrases such as 'everyday life', 'basic literacy', 'function effectively' and (literacy skills) 'relevant to the workplace'. These phrases demonstrate both a vagueness which allows a great degree of interpretation, and to my mind, an "ideological pretence of the value-free curriculum decision" (Beyer and Apple, 1998: 93). The particular form this pretence takes in this case relates to the unquestioning nature in which what notions of 'everyday life' as a case in hand might mean. As Apple (2014) noted, educational policy-making has been subjected to reworking, or 'thinning' of 'key words' in order to change our 'common sense' understanding of those terms which are deemed crucial (see also Apple, 2013). In this case, it is the notion of 'everyday life' which is stripped of any connotation beyond those associated with low-skilled employment and 'compliant' citizenry. I would argue that, much

like Apple's example of the way the word 'democracy' was thus changed, the notion of everyday life, in the context of special needs education, carries significant emotional weight. In this interpretation, Pearson's guidance deems everyday life to be a situation where pupils are expected to respond to others, and not venture beyond the boundaries of what is familiar to them. It is interesting to note that a number of participants in this study identified this exact point as an issue to remedy in the FSQ framework (see section 1.A of this chapter). It is my proposition that this terminology, while it can be seen as an example of "neoliberal and neoconservative" positions (Apple, 2014), in fact in the case of the FSQ allows teachers to practice their own value judgement of the meanings of these terms, and in some cases adopt interpretations which do not align with the FSQ 'spirit'. In my analysis, it seems evident that the texts which held most value in the eyes of participants were those addressing what they saw as the aims of their teaching; and oftentimes, these were tied in with notions of ameliorating disadvantage associated with pupils' SEN.

The accounts of Marilyn and Melissa provide insight into such curricular activity: both teachers identified the aforementioned guidelines of using 'accessible and familiar' texts as problematic. It was their interpretation of what constitutes a (desired, aspirational) 'real world' that dictated their textual choices. While Melissa chose to focus on multi-modal media texts and current affairs, Marilyn privileged an effort to make literary content accessible to her pupils.

In terms of curricular design, participants in this study are arguably closest to Schwab's Practical model (2013). This is the case on two main counts: the concept of deliberation and the art of the eclectic. Deliberation is a rejection of the linear flow of ends-means. It "treats both ends and means … as mutually determining one another" (Schwab, 2013: 618). It is an iterative movement, a constant reflection on the way teaching and materials actually affect learning, including acceptance of unforeseen 'side effects'. The concept of deliberation objects to anatomising content into lists of objectives which trivialise the subject matter itself as well as teachers' thoughts about it (Schwab, 1983); much like criticism of vocational qualifications mentioned earlier, this could constitute an objection to the FSQ's underlying principles. On the other hand, it being a skills-based qualification, in practical terms teachers have flexibility to engage in a deliberative pattern of curriculum planning. The specification for Reading at Level 2 for example (Edexcel, 2010), states that pupils will be tested on:

> Three texts based on a single context. The three texts will comprise: • one narrative text, eg a newspaper article • one informative text, eg a letter • a problem solving exercise, eg drawing on three adverts from different sources.

Such guidelines leave space for deliberation in respect of themes and genres; modes of linking texts to the required 'single context'; the immediacy of the texts to pupils' out-of-school life. In all these respects, teachers can employ deliberation and refer to any of what Schwab termed the 'commonplaces' (teacher, student, what is taught and the teaching-learning milieu) as appropriate. While Schwab in his work advocated a particular make-up of local bodies to make curricular decision within schools (Schwab, 1983), which seem far from the reality of present-day English schools, it is perhaps worthwhile employing his metaphor of 'Moscow and the Provinces' to again claim that in fact the FSQ curriculum – in its daily content (as opposed to structural) implementations - appears to allow the provinces (i.e. classroom practitioners) a significant degree of autonomy from Moscow (in this case, DfE and the exam boards).

Another of Schwab's responses to the limitation he saw in a single theory-based curriculum, was the eclectic; put simply, this approach harnesses what Schwab concedes to be the usefulness of theory – providing bodies of knowledge and framing conversations by the use of terms and distinctions. The eclectic arts further negate some of the weaknesses of theory by overcoming the aforementioned limitations of scope and abstraction: the curriculum planner in this approach chooses different existing theories in a non-exclusive manner. As Posner (1998: 86) suggests: "Piagetian theory helps the planner understand the learner's cognitive development", but "obscures the social psychology and sociology of the classroom". The eclectic art allows the use of different theories in combination. This point is to my mind material to the particular context examined in this study. All the teachers participating in the study are engaged in teaching the English FSQ as an 'intervention' aimed at addressing SEN. It is, then, an inherent part of their professional reality that teaching involves in addition to any subject-specific knowledge (e.g. linguistics) and pedagogical knowledge, also specific SEN-related theories. These might be related to particular types of impairment, current legislative frameworks and statutory guidelines, or SEN-specific classroom practice theories.
This body of knowledge manifests itself in the recurring theme in the participants' accounts of modifying the curriculum, and in particular their choice of texts, in line with pupils' interests and the particular teaching context that is considered. It also came to the fore in accounts of designing literacy sessions for young women in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. The concept of deliberation seems to fit in general terms with the kind of thinking teachers described whereby they considered the most pressing needs of their pupils and adapted curricular content in line with this.

The eclectic arts are manifest in the participants' accounts, to my mind, largely due to a thematic thread which is seen throughout this study: the complexities of literacy education are at all times intertwined with the SEN context. In other words, it is inevitable that there is a "superiority of a set of competing paradigms over the hegemony of a single overarching scheme" (Shulman, 1984). Chief, and constant, among these paradigms are the functional literacy paradigm, and the (at times competing) SEN pedagogies, such as meta-cognitive instruction (EEF, 2019) and adherence to the dictates of the SEND CoP.

3. Research question 3: What role do teachers see for literacy instruction in the education of SEN students? Does this tie in, and in what ways, to their life chances and any possible social and educational disadvantage?

In her comments about the purpose she saw in teaching literacy to her pupils, Orna used a metaphor of the SEN pupil being a stranger in a foreign land. This was probably the most powerful of all the participants' accounts, in which their teaching work is articulated as an effort to improve their pupils' life chances in the face of challenges relating to their SEN: "They're just there in Japan basically. I know that's like a silly analogy but I think it's very painful because they're shut off and they're not like, they're not able to exist fully." The importance of mastering literate capabilities could not be set out in stronger terms, evoking pupils' very existence. Similarly, Sam spoke about his teaching as an effort to avoid the prospect of pupils becoming "poor, inarticulate". In short, the participants in this study presented a moral purpose to their work, and an ambitious one, to enable their pupils to "lead a more fulfilling life", in Melissa's words. This approach is backed up by a body of research which demonstrates how 'inadequate literacy' (Webster and Blatchford, 2018) adversely affects pupils' life chances, and is seen as an inherent aspect of the potential risks of SEN pupils being vulnerable to 'school failure'.

3.a. Life chances and conceptualisations of SEN: In the broadest terms, two differing approaches emerged in this respect, though it is important to note that these were, typically, expressed as 'parallel' ideas by the same participants. The way perceived disadvantages are seen calls into play conceptualisations of SEN: On the one hand, participants spoke about what might be seen as 'within-child' difficulties; those resulting from 'organic' causes (Wedell, 2003), and in this respect, literacy is seen as a 'cognitive' phenomenon (Street, 1984). Participants spoke, for instance, of the particular challenges faced by pupils diagnosed with

Dyslexia, and the way comprehension tasks inevitably pose greater difficulties for them than for their peers. Liam, who represented this 'cognitive' model, commented: "I found a lot of people… with special needs, they will have more difficulty in communicating", placing the 'disability' within individuals (Oliver, 2013). On the other hand, participants expressed a view of disadvantage tied in with a social critique. Here, the disadvantage related to the status of 'being SEN', and demonstrated, for example, in Marilyn's claim that her students have "historically… been failed through the system." In this telling, the disability is the result of a systemic set-up which places obstacles to their successful participation. This attitude is very much in line with ideas of 'labelling theory' (Wedell, 2013; Boyle, 2014), where pupils are at risk of 'living up' to teachers' expectations, or in the case of pupils with SEN, often fulfilling the expectations of low-attainment. Marilyn's remark shows how she identifies this as the 'biggest thing' to consider in her work. Sam expanded on this critique by bringing into the conversation his long-spanning experience in the field of special education. He spoke about changes in the educational terrain, ultimately leading to the expansion, or 'elaboration' (Tomlinson, 1985) of the mainstream system in England. This, in turn, impacted the level of support lower-needs pupils can access.

3.b. the four resources model analysis and life chances:

Using the four resources model to evaluate literacy teaching facilitated a kind of questioning otherwise absent from the FSQ framework. It might be helpful to demonstrate the value such an approach adds by using a typical text used in a recent FSQ exam (AQA, 2108). The exam included three reading texts which share the theme of cyber security and crime. Conventional literacy teaching and assessment – including the FSQ – treats such texts as inherently representing specific levels of difficulty and useful for particular learning activities. The four resources model, in contrast, acknowledges that texts – seen within their social function – can represent a wide variety of skills, and be associated with distinctly different positions of compliance or agency. A web page about cyber-crime can be read as an in-class exercise, where the focus of work is meaning-making and comprehension, as is expected in the exam questions. A 'text user' approach would use the same text, for example, to consider how – assuming pupils are expected to reach such a position – they would use such a textual platform to further ideological, economic or other agendas, in this case the drive to intervene in early cyber offending. Yet another radically different approach would be to concentrate on critiquing these ideological, political and economic agendas, for instance by questioning the links between crime prevention and employment in the cyber industry, and interrogating from the learners'

own experiences the moral boundaries between criminality, enterprise and government power in respect of cyber privacy.

This example demonstrates, by referring to three of the four resources, how the social function and intention of a literacy activity in the classroom can change the complexion of any text. In other words, there is no 'neutral', or 'everyday' text according to this approach, and what pupils are asked to 'do' with the textual resources brought into class will position them socially.

In the participants' accounts and the consequent analyses, it is clear that teachers consider carefully what Luke and Freebody (1999) termed the dimension of literacy repertoire. That is, in those cases where they identified potential disadvantage associated with the limitations of the FSQ as set out in policy documents and exam board text books, they often responded with an expansion of the textual genres brought into class. Beside the textual choices teachers made, the kinds of activities they chose for their pupils in class are good indicators of where participants placed their accent in order to ameliorate the disadvantages set out above. As detailed throughout this study, most of the activities described in participants' accounts can be seen as falling under the text participant (semantic competence), and text user (pragmatic competency) categories. It is worth here revisiting two salient implications of these findings. Firstly, the text participant role appears to fit comfortably with the kind of literacy paradigm governing the FSQ. That is, seeing literacy education as a means to enhance an 'uncontentious' skill set with a view to producing citizens 'literate for work'. In tune, semantic competency entails literacy activities to facilitate understanding and composing texts in a variety of genres (Rush, 2004). This type of activity is the mainstay of the FSQ exam-board endorsed resources. The 'moral' emphasis in these activities, as participants saw it, was in line with the FSQ policy framework, as Noa commented: "The end game is to give the kids we're teaching skills they need to get further in life… So by giving them the functional skills we're enabling them to get a job which can then lead to them getting a better job." Luke and Freebody (1999) were clear that the four competencies shouldn't be seen as mutually exclusive, or hierarchical (see also Serafini, 2012); in activities such as compiling CVs and responding to reading comprehension questions, pupils must call upon pragmatic competencies as well, for instance employing tacit understanding of specific literacy 'institutional rituals' (Luke at al., 2011). However, in the participants' accounts of their teaching practices, it appears that where issues of social disadvantage were tackled, it was the pragmatic competencies that were commonly worked on. Considering the cases of both Marilyn and Melissa, who sought to enhance their pupils' ability

to leverage texts to their social advantage, the activities to which they attributed most value were those addressing the 'various cultural and social functions of texts' (Rush, 2004). Examples of these were Marilyn's sessions discussing reading for pleasure, and Melissa's treatment of a TV documentary and consequent classroom practice of reflecting and critiquing it. This point is crucial to understanding the way teachers conceptualise the link between literacy education and pupils' life chances: the key factor teachers perceived as being relevant in relation to their pupils' disadvantage was social participation. The activities mentioned are exemplars of teaching which enables pupils to "learn through social experiences what our culture counts as adequate reading for school, work, leisure or civil purposes" (Freebody and Luke, 1990).

A second point which stands out following the four resources analysis is the limited use of critical competencies, or the text analyst capabilities of pupils. In my analysis, I find that it was only Sam's account which described such activities, when he argued that he was supporting his pupils to identify that texts are "written by persons with particular dispositions and orientation" (Freebody and Luke, 1990). Sam went a little way beyond that, also describing an attempt to encourage his pupils to consider the way a particular text, with a political backdrop, might 'position them as readers' (Luke et al., 2011). However, these instances were the exception, and I found no further work directly recognisable as critical. Moreover, it is arguably the case that the critical capacities as set out here and in the four resources model, are not equal in their force to what is described elsewhere as critical literacy. Rush (2004: 39), for instance, maintains that critical literacy also entails "a process that exposes and works against unequal power relationships in society". This description goes beyond what is found in the four resources literature, where the text analyst is called upon to be aware of the language and idea systems that come into play in textual work, the emphasis typically being placed on the uncovering of tacit assumptions made in texts presented as 'neutral' (Freebody and Luke, 1990). To a great extent, this type of critical reading is reminiscent of critical reading as it is described in DfE's (2013:4) GCSE subject content document, where critical reading designates "reflecting critically and evaluatively on text, using the context of the text and drawing on knowledge and skills gained from wider reading". While these strands of critical reading share a drive to uncover bias, and even ideological positions, it is certainly the case that the latter version of critical reading is devoid of the ideological commitment to "read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Bishop, 2014: 1).

It seems to me that due to the emphasis on enhancing social participation, and 'access' as the moral focal point to teachers' work, a wider, socially-informed critical agenda never developed. This was to be expected in light of the work framed as a SEN intervention. I do believe, though, that this brings into focus a tension in the teaching of the FSQ: firstly, a general, if unarticulated unease about the restrictive nature of the FSQ was pervasive. In my discussion above on literacy conceptualisations, it is clear that participants had ambiguous feelings towards the qualification, which could be seen as suspicions of what Freire (1996) called false generosity (Maclear, 2016); a 'paternalistic' version of education, where educators work out of compassion, but do not attempt to change the fundamentals of pupils' social reality. There are two ways in which this critique can be seen as material to the educational work described here. First, despite practically all the participants sharing their concern for their pupils vis-à-vis their perceived 'SEN', none of them brought this to reflect on their lessons. In other words, the arena of disadvantage was at no point interrogated together with the pupils, in what would be seen as emancipatory pedagogy (Friere, 1996; Shor, 2012; Apple, 2006). Secondly, as a consequence, this absolute focus on 'access', or participation, resulted in there being little consideration for the social realities that these pupils were equipped to participate in. The clearest example of this phenomenon was Orna's reflection on a 16 year-old pupil from the ultra-orthodox Jewish community: "I get nervous if I think oh my goodness this child is now 16 because of the community that she's in, she really actually could be married by 18-19". Orna went on to find a curricular response to the immediate challenges this might pose to her low-attaining pupil, but did not make any attempt at discussing the specific social reality in question. The curricular response Orna chose, bringing health forms to the classroom, anticipating that her pupil would be called on to complete such forms as a young mother is undoubtedly grounded in a solid rationale; it falls short, however, of "conversations across socio-cultural categories and forms of interpellation" (Goodley, 2013: 636). In this case, and taking into account also nuanced, socially-informed framing of literacy, it might consist of examining the way such a health form positions the pupil as a 'low attaining', 'pupil with SEN', young female in her particular community.

4. Avenues for possible further research:

This study took a tempered approach in its scope, and only attempted to interrogate the curricular practices within one small-scale teaching service. In my investigations, I could not find any quantitative data as to how far-reaching the use of the English FSQ as a 'SEN

intervention' is nationwide. Such data would help substantiate or otherwise the notion of a trend to respond to SEN-related low attainment in literacy with curricular segregation.

My experience conducting this study also leads me to believe there is a need to expand upon the body of literature which examines a whole plethora of learning programmes aimed at the SEN population, using a critical, socially-informed prism. The idea is to decidedly move away from the well-established routines and paradigms of 'evidence-based' inquiry, beyond notions of remedial enterprise, towards asking questions such as 'what is it we are teaching when we teach literacy'? 'How might this impact on our pupils' life chances'? 'Are we in danger of being complicit in cementing their disadvantage'?

Teaching the English FSQ to pupils in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in London brought up a host of unique factors I could only touch upon. I believe that the place English as a taught language holds in this community and the expectations of SEN teaching in it, to name but two specific areas of investigation, merit further research into the literacy teaching practices in the Orthodox Jewish community.

5. Concluding thoughts:

5.a. A novel approach to narrative research into curriculum: positioning a particular portion of the taught curriculum of a specific pupil group as the subject of inquiry demanded a degree of academic agility. In the context of narrative research, it was helpful to frame the FSQ as the 'whole'; the equivalent of a protagonist whose life story is interrogated. The necessity of such a move can be seen as a response to the 'fragmentation' of the schooling system in England (West and Wolfe, 2018); of the English curriculum within schools (i.e. the FSQ vs. English GCSE); and SEN provision increasingly being perceived as a separate educational enterprise within a school system, with its own desired outcomes, dedicated workforce and distinctive ethos and methodologies. In other words, in order to adequately delineate the way the English FSQ is taught by the participants of this study, there was a need to create a nuanced viewpoint; assumptions about a unitary experience of studying English in a school in England, or of being a 'SEN pupil' would have been misplaced.

5.b. The English FSQ as 'an idea':

Perhaps the most striking 'movement' depicted in the narrative presented here, is between the language of the FSQ policy and guidance documentation, and the varied interpretations presented by the teachers. I would argue that presenting this movement exposed inherent tensions, and allowed the exposure of the ways in which teachers engage in "sense-making" in relation to a given curriculum (Troyer, 2019: 4). As is evident in this study, the 'idea' of the FSQ, namely a functional approach to literacy, has a 'common sense' appeal. Participants in the study readily acknowledged and presented their understanding of it: broadly speaking, it related to practical, 'everyday' language usage. The functional approach to literacy on the one hand connotes a progression to low-skilled employment, a restricted linguistic repertoire, domestication and a drive to 'further subordinate' (Lankshear, 2002*)* pupils. On the other hand, the language it employs, and indeed the curricular guidance it provides, is opaque enough to allow teacher-led alternative interpretations of what literacy is and how pupils might relate to it. One aspect of such opaqueness has been already discussed in terms of Apple's (2014) treatment of key words in neo-liberal and neo-conservative educational policy. It similarly features in Fairclough's (2001a: 6) discussion of language in 'new capitalism': "making the socio-economic transformations of new capitalism and the policies of governments to facilitate them seem inevitable… representing the imaginaries of interested policies as the way the world actually is". In other words, presenting value-laden ideological policy moves as natural and inevitable.

This opaqueness can further be framed in similar terms to those Alan and Youdell (2017: 75) put forward when discussing the 'ghosting' of children with SEN from the 2015 SEND Code of Practice. I do not have the scope to adequately represent the theoretical background to the term here. However, in the simplest terms, it refers to the linguistic manoeuvre within a policy document whereby it "render(s) spectral certain elements that were previously… explicit". Rather than erase the notion of specific impairments in the CoP, it 'refuses to name them'. In the FSQ documentation, I would argue, the specific nature of the 'everyday lives' and 'progression to employment', are equally used as a masking device: what is 'ghosted' here is the comparative disadvantage of these lives and of these employment opportunities. As Alan and Youdell (2017: 76) contend, it is not that the CoP objects to diagnoses; it is that it "demands that the reader calls up these diagnoses him/herself". Similarly, the reader of the FSQ documents implicitly sees 'everyday life' as the life of a low-skilled worker, employment as low-paid employment and indeed, a pupil of the FSQ as a low-attaining one. The accounts of

teachers presented here demonstrate that while they indeed *did* engage in this 'interpellation', they also found ways to negotiate and at times contradict the underlying 'idea' that is the FSQ.

I find it important to resist the temptation to present teachers' practice, when it negates the FSQ 'spirit', in any simplistic sense as political resistance. It seems to me that it is more accurate to see these curricular practices in terms of sense-making and negotiating in a reciprocal relationship with the curriculum, rather than as "transmission or resistance" (Troyer, 2019: 3). Put another way, looked upon from a macro, political prism, the enactment of curricular, textual and pedagogical practices can be seen as "reproducing and challenging the multitude of unequal relations of power" (Apple, 1993: 2). However, in the context of teachers who are SEN practitioners, a more suitable characterisation would be that their literacy teaching as carried out through the English FSQ involves "professional ingenuity in navigating the enabling and disenabling local contexts of policy" (Luke, 2012: 9).

When used as a SEN 'intervention', the FSQ becomes loaded with yet more significance and inherent tensions. On the one hand, it can be seen as a form of segregation by curriculum (see Tomlinson, 2015). On the other, it reflects real concern for the future of vulnerable pupils as they enter into the adult world. This concern is enshrined in current SEND legislation and is, in my own professional experience, also a reflection of genuine apprehension on the part of young people with SEN, their families and teachers regarding their future prospects. Here, too, teachers must find a pragmatic, practical and realistic approach to preparation for the adult world and the world of work, while maintaining curricular equity, and fostering ambition on the part of their pupils.

Being the second-most popular English exam in England, there is a remarkable scarcity of scholarship examining the FSQ, particularly considering the significant departures it makes from traditional English qualifications. This study opened up and interrogated the taken-for-granted notion of literacy functionality. Under scrutiny, its unitary, matter-of-fact façade crumbles. It appears malleable according to social context. It can be seen as out-of-step with technology and societal advances. It is, in fact, dependant on interpretation. It can also be theorised in strikingly different terms to those offered by the FSQ: Aronowitz (1985, in Giroux, 1988: 67) conceptualizes functionality as pupils' ability to "locate themselves in history, to see themselves as social actors able to debate their… futures".

5.c Treating literacy *and* SEN as socially constructed:

Both literacy and SEN present a challenge to teachers in respect of the way they are approached conceptually. Working within a specialist teaching service, it is clear that to a degree professional accent is placed upon psychological, deficit notions of SEN. Equally, the acquisition and mastery of literacy skills are typically conceived of and couched in terms of overcoming impairment, and literacy in itself is seen as a mechanical skill to be acquired. There are valid reasons for both positions which flow from the daily experiences of teachers and pupils. Considering critical literacy in this regard might be helpful to demonstrate the point. Shor (1999: 3) describes critical literacy thus: "language use that questions the social construction of the self". I believe that any teacher of pupils labelled SEN will acknowledge the very real challenges of enabling these pupils to access such ideas and acting upon them. The same teachers are very likely to simultaneously acknowledge the social and educational disadvantage their pupils face - both in terms of their literacy education, and their SEN status - hence giving potency to the argument in favour of adopting such an approach with them. The dilemma then is real.

Treating literacy teaching itself - i.e. the curricular and pedagogic practices, the assessment procedures and the 'classroom reality' - as an arena of social practice offers a way of 'capturing' both SEN and literacy within a socially-informed paradigm. In doing so, teachers might consider for instance the actual nature and implications of a 'functional' approach. The literacy instruction which any given society provides groups within it, seen historically, can be a tool for exclusion, similar to Street's (1984) historical examples of access to the technologies of literacy. Literacy is not, then, a-priori a force of progress, social or cognitive (Street, 2017). Investigating the FSQ-SEN classroom as a social arena shed light on language usages, established in classroom practice as well as entangled in wider school protocols – these language usages were framed as teacher textual-curricular choices. This study uncovered nuanced deliberations which while keeping mindful of the 'SEN factor', did not neglect the social implications of language or of special needs status. Pupils, then, were constructed as citizens, as consumers of culture, and members of particular communities, as opposed to solely 'pupils with SEN'. The English FSQ session then can move beyond 'remedial intervention' to meaningful learning. My salient point here is that adopting a social-model understanding of SEN in itself, while treating literacy in line with the 'autonomous' model (Street, 1984) might very well result in well-intentioned curricular and educational designs which ultimately work

as ‘false generosity’ in the sense that they fail to reflect on the fact that literacy itself is a social construct. Inducting pupils only into its ‘hegemonic’ facets deprives them of their agency (Giroux, 1988).

Equally, adopting the ‘ideological’ model of literacy (Street, 1984) without insisting on a socially-informed approach to SEN, will ill serve such pupils. Here, the main risk is being absent, forgotten, and neglected when the relationship between literacy and power is theorised. SEN pupils are found across class, gender and ethnic divides (notwithstanding the clear links between categories of disadvantage, Holt et al., 2019), and present a specific challenge as a category in respect of literacy. In the socially-informed literacy literature, SEN is all too often either ignored or designated as a ‘specialist’ area of investigation (Freebody, 2005). This will very often lead back to the psychological, mechanical approaches to teaching yet again.

Epilogue:

I aim to use this study as a template for future curricular deliberations and design in our SEN teaching service. It has demonstrated the value of distilling teachers’ accounts of their curricular choices: often for the first time they named, affirmed, or rejected what emerged as the social and moral drivers of their work. Considering the social aspects of literacy as the four resources model does and explicitly linking literacy, SEN and life chances are examples of linguistic and conceptual tools for teachers to consider their curricular priorities outside of the FSQ-sanctioned language. The interviews studied here took place some time ago now. In a recent conversation with Orna, she mentioned her intention – instigated by her interview – to incorporate literary content in her lessons. She had begun her attempts, but it was not easy, she said, to explain to her pupil why they were doing this: “my pupil and I need to learn this together: you need to have enough language to be able to talk about language”.

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Glossary

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Also referred to as ASC: Autistic Spectrum Condition.

FSQ: Functional Skills Qualification

IFS: Institutional Focused Study

KS4: Key Stage 4, the two years of school education which incorporate GCSEs, and other examinations, in maintained schools in England normally known as Year 10 and Year 11

LSA: Learning Support Assistant

SEMH: Social Emotional and Mental Health needs

SEN: Special Educational Needs

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disability

SEND CoP: the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice

Appendix 1

1. Special Educational Needs and Social - Educational Disadvantage

Special education as an enterprise is widely recognised as a project of social justice, though both SEN and social justice are of course disputed epistemologically (Christensen and Dorn, 1997). An interrogation of the associated disadvantages which might come with SEN in the context of literacy instruction and practices is fundamental to this study, for it takes as given that an emancipatory pedagogy in its simplest sense is desirable (Galloway, 2012). In other words, that any disadvantage should be challenged by pedagogic practice, rather than entrenched. In this section I outline three aspects of potential disadvantage in the studied group and will endeavour to outline their theoretical backdrop.

In a literacy class of students with SEN, the first form of potential disadvantage is somewhat obvious; students' relationship with literacy informs to a great extent their SEN 'status'. That is, it is widely, and formally, acknowledged that due to their SEN, they struggle with literacy education. Examples of this might be in relation to reading and writing (e.g. dyslexia, see Huston, 1992); speaking and listening (ADHD; ASD, see Happé, Booth, Charlton and Hughes, 2006); understanding of narrative and social relations (Gersten et al., 2001). In this respect, the disadvantage is related to particular forms of 'impairment'; in the current schooling system in the UK, and indeed in the context of the studied group, diagnoses informed decisions leading to 'person-centred' approaches and Individual Learning Plans (Reindal, 2008) that ultimately led to the implementation of the Functional Skills programme in question. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) sets out as a guide for schools the "areas of need" and stipulates that schools' response should be "High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils". The tensions around this type of response to educational needs relates to what is now commonly accepted as good practice in British schools, i.e. 'inclusion' (DfE, 2015). Put simply, this is a move from categorising students towards valuing diversity in the classroom (see for example, Barton, 1997). The idea of inclusion and its well- established links to sociological critiques informed in particular by Foucault (1973; see also Mintz and Wyse, 2015) is still widely debated (e.g. Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2010) and will be discussed below. However, it is worth repeating Mintz and Wyse's (2015: 1169)

appeal to take account of "theoretical knowledge organised around diagnostic categories" in our pedagogic practice.

Beyond the strictly educational-cognitive disadvantage, lies the risk of disadvantage which is related to future prospects, or 'life chances' as a result of their SEN and educational achievements. DfE figures (2016) demonstrate that students with SEN are less likely to hold a "sustained education training or employment destination" than their non-SEN peers. In the context of literacy study, the question would be if, to what extent and in what ways, the knowledge, qualifications and their associated 'cultural capital' (Carrington and Luke, 1997) students accumulate restrict their future prospects. Specifically, spheres of life chances are what Freebody and Luke (1990) termed 'job credential demands' and participation in the community (DfE, 2015), including the concept of cultural literacy which will be discussed below. When considering literacy, it seems indisputable that particular forms of literacy, including 'academic literacy' (Lea and Street, 2006) hold a position of privilege in our society (Gee, 2015; Hamilton, 2001), and therefore not being fully inducted into these would disadvantage learners as they move out of school into their adult lives. Lea and Street break down the academic literacies model into three discrete models, all of which seem to betray aspects of disadvantage for the SEN student: the *skills model*, in essence a cognitive – technical conceptualisation, has been addressed above; the *academic socialisation* model and the *academic literacies* model rely upon a variety of implicit skills which students are required to bring with them to the task of 'meaning making' (Lea, 2004) in higher education. As Goodley (2007:319) noted: "Educational environments, curricular content… are all normatively associated with environments, standards and achievements that are at odds with the quirkiness of disabled learners". Some of the core practices in schools, for instance celebrating high-achievements, are tainted as entrenching the exclusion of disabled and SEN students (Goodley, 2007). As the example of academic literacy, I think, demonstrates, low-attainment is in itself a form of disadvantage in respect of what is probably the most obvious (and perhaps desirable) progression route from school, higher education. It is important to note that this is not limited to higher education: Finkelstein (1993: 3) from a materialist analysis of disability made the point that large –scale industry created a landscape where "Being normal… became a dominant criterion for employment".

Lastly, it is essential to turn to the issue of categorisation itself. The question at hand here is: does the categorisation of students as having SEN in itself create disadvantage? Or, more specifically, do SEN students by way of being assigned to the category; 'being on the SEN register', as a result endure a 'reproduction of inequalities' (Benjamin et al., 2003)? Relating this question to academic literature necessitates two steps: making an attempt to extricate the category SEN from wider disability, and providing an epistemological account of special needs.

Within the field of disability studies, it has been pointed out that those with 'learning difficulties' often find themselves excluded from the mainstream of the disability movement (Goodley, 2001). As Goodley points out, the social model of disability has allowed those with physical disability a socio-historical 'position', while those with intellectual, or 'mental' impairment, remained devoid of this. That is, while the disability movement forged ahead grounding conceptualisations of disability as socially constructed, 'learning disability' remained within the realm of impairment which was not socially understood. For the purpose of this study, then, SEN is different to disability, in that it does not imply any physical impairment. SEN is the educational construct tied in with the inclusion debate and broadly interchangeable with the term 'learning difficulties'.

Reindal (2008) sheds light on the same phenomenon in respect of the criticism levelled at Special Education by disability thinkers for preserving an understanding of disability in accord to the medical model. Ware (2010: 244) noted that "regardless of the writer's disciplinary home" a critical approach to the 'medical model' which locates the disability solely with the individual, and pathologizes him has been accepted across disability studies. During the 1990's, the social model emerged as the response to these criticisms (Watson, 2012:3): "the focus is on the social and environmental barriers faced by disabled people and the way cultural processes and policy frameworks either promote or deny inclusion."

While acknowledging the important role of the social model to major developments in legislation and understanding of disability in modern society (Watson, 2012; Rieser, 2012), disability studies have

moved on to deal with issues of identity and subjectivity (Goodley, 2012); this has been accepted by many researchers as a theoretical and conceptual advancement, as Goodley (2012: 631) states:

> "If late twentieth-century disability studies was associated with establishing the factors that led to the structural, economic and cultural exclusion of people with sensory, physical and cognitive impairments, then disability studies in the current century might be seen as a time of developing nuanced theoretical responses to these factors".

In this vein, a variety of strands of what came to be called Critical Disability Studies emerged. *Intersectional understanding of disability* focuses on the manner in which "disability intersects with other forms of social disadvantage linked to race, gender and social class" (Liasidou, 2013); hence moving away form the disability being a defining individual characteristic, and towards a structural analysis (Barton, 1986). This approach puts centre stage the 'otherness' that disability becomes as a multi-faceted reality. This idea is complemented and extended in the work of Fiona Campbell (2008; 2009) who presents the concept of *ableism* to explain the ways in which disability is negative, and should be 'cured' or indeed eliminated. The epistemological implication of this is an implicit positioning of the disabled body or mind in relation to an idealised able one.

These developments in the disability studies field, in many ways do not assist with the central dilemma in SEN whereby practitioners need to identify pupils' needs without the negative associated effects "that often have come about in the work of classification" (Reindal, 2008: 135). In mainstream schools, this issue is perhaps exasperated by the fact that all those identified as 'having SEN' are grouped together by an abstract notion of deficit (Shakespeare, 2008). As Reindal (2008) reminds us, there is a point at which a 'need' becomes a 'disability' – and this would suggest that categorisation itself has the potential to create disadvantage. Reindal (2008; 2010) proposes a 'social relational understanding of disability', positing disability as a product of social relationships between those designated as 'problematically different' and those who embody normality (Thomas, 2004). Reindal (2008) sees this model as suited for conceptualisation of SEN as it allows the difference between 'personal restriction' and 'social hindrance' to be recognised without needing to regress to a personalised understanding of

disability. This is a complex debate (Thomas, 2004) which cannot be served justly in this brief outline; it does usefully, though, serve as a reminder of the moral and emotional problematics associated with what Goodley and Parley (2001) termed the psy-complex which comes into play when a student is designated as 'having SEN'.

Appendix 2:

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

REC Reference Number:

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Literacy instruction to SEN pupils in mainstream schools – a conceptual exploration of teachers' beliefs

We would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. You should only agree to take part in the study if, having read the following information, you are happy that you understand it and wish to participate. **Choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way**. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information or time to decide.

Background to the study

Literacy is often seen as a key factor in pupils' future prospects – be this cultural, career – related or economic. Those pupils in mainstream classes, who have Special Educational Needs, might face additional challenges when studying literacy (or simply 'English'). This study sets out to examine teachers' and SEN practitioners' beliefs about the most important aspects of literacy instruction and curricula in relation to these pupils. In particular, I aim to understand the purposes of teaching English as seen by teachers and LSAs, and how this might differ according to pupils' attainment and / or SEN. It's equally important to try and understand how teachers and LSAs perceive and evaluate the two current curricula taught in school – English GCSE and English Functional Skills. This study is conducted following a research project which investigated perceptions of literacy among a small group of year - 9 pupils which was carried out last year.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am looking for participants who have some involvement in delivering one or two of the English curricula above to pupils who have SEN or other, undiagnosed barriers to learning.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part. You should read this information sheet and if you have any questions you should ask the research team. Choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. I will then discuss the interview procedure with you and arrange to

interview you in a private place (for confidentiality reasons) on the premises where you work (or at a suitable venue in a local public site if you prefer).

The study has two phases: in the first, you will be asked to comment in writing on a text from the English curriculum which you have chosen. In the second, you will be interviewed for up to an hour. The interview will be based on a topic guide, but will be flexible to ensure you feel comfortable and have a chance to voice your ideas. The interview will be recorded, subject to your permission. All recordings of data on audio-equipment will be deleted after transcription. Even if you have decided to take part, you are still free to stop your participation at any time during the interview and to have research data/information relating to you withdrawn without giving any reason up to 4 weeks after the interview takes place.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

The information from this study will help me understand the ways in which teachers and LSAs conceive English teaching to SEN pupils. Participation will provide an opportunity to reflect on core aspects of professionalism in this area. The results of this study will be made available to you on completion.

The main disadvantage of taking part is the time you will be giving: up to half an hour for the written response and up to an hour for the interview.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

The setting and the names of individuals will remain confidential.

What is said in the interview is regarded as strictly confidential and will be held securely until the research is finished. All data for analysis will be anonymised. In reporting on the research findings, I will not reveal the names of any participants or the organisation where you work. At all times there will be no possibility of you as individuals being linked with the data.

The UK Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to all information gathered within the interviews and held on password-locked computer files and locked cabinets within King's College London. No data will be accessed by anyone other than me; and anonymity of the material will be protected by using false names. No data will be able to be linked back to any individual taking part in the interview.

How is the project being funded?

The project is being funded by the researcher.

What will happen to the results of the study?

This study will form my Research Based Thesis for my doctoral studies. You will be offered to read this on completion. I might also disseminate the research findings through publication and conferences within the UK.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:
Daniel Stavrou
Daniel.stavrou@kcl.ac.uk

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Professor Alan Cribb

Alan.cribb@kcl.ac.uk

+44 (0)20 7848 3151

Postal address:
Waterloo Bridge Wing
Franklin-Wilkins Building
Waterloo
United Kingdom

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.

Appendix 3:

RBT Interview Schedule

General notes: interviews will take place with up to 8 participants, all of whom are teachers and SEN practitioners. The interviews will take place after an initial phase of providing a written response commenting on particular texts taken from an English curriculum. This will inform part of the interview. It is anticipated interviews will last approximately an hour, and will take place at a location of participants' choice.

Area of investigation	**Question**
GCSE / FS Curriculum	'Curriculum stories' questions: when did you first begin teaching this qualification? What did you think of it at the time? Has this changed over time?
Teacher practice	Can you remember how you first sessions teaching FS went?
Perceptions of SEN	How would you describe the type of pupils you teach FS to?
Teacher knowledge / skills	When you first begun teaching Functional Skills, how well-equipped did you feel to do this?
GCSE / FS Curriculum	What qualifications are you involved in teaching? In broad terms how would you summarise what this qualification teaches?
GCSE / FS Curriculum	What source materials do you use while teaching this qualification? What do you see as the purpose of teaching these texts to your pupils?
GCSE / FS Curriculum + Professional identity	More generally what do you see as the purpose of literacy / English teaching in school? Do you feel that the curriculum you teach addresses this purpose?
Literacy instruction and SEN	When thinking about SEN students in your classroom, are the purposes of teaching English any different? Would you say that generally you adapt your teaching for specific needs of SEN pupils? Can you give an example?
Literacy instruction and SEN	Do you think that SEN students in your classroom face any additional challenges or disadvantage compared to their peers? How do you respond to this?
Reference to written account	You chose text x as an important text you teach and explained why. Is this any different when you consider it in relation to SEN students?
Reference to written account	Could you think of an example of a text which you feel is redundant in the curriculum, or perhaps has negative effects? Please elaborate.
Text books	What do you think of the FS text books?
Types of literacy	What types of literacy do you think school is teaching pupils? What are your thoughts on the value of this?
Life chances	Do you think there is any link between the literacy instruction pupils receive at school and their life chances? Please elaborate

Teachers' professional knowledge	How do you see the FS qualification in relation to your teacher training / expertise? Or: what kind of knowledge and skills as a teacher do you think you need to teach FS successfully?
Teachers' professional identity	How would you describe your orientation towards the curriculum? i.e. do you see yourself mainly as a curriculum developer; transmitter etc.?
Pupils' perceptions	Can you describe the way pupils respond to the FS curriculum? Can you give any particular examples?
'Narrative Fragments'	Can you think of any instances when you could see a link between literacy capacity and life chances etc.?
Future	What would you like to be teaching in the future?

Appendix 4:

Thematic analysis of transcripts: 'story map'

Small stories:

- Marilyn: story of 'resistance'; Sherlock Holmes – directed pupil to library.
- Sam: the pupil who ended up owning a chain of barber shops.
- Liam: pupils crying because they were asked to undertake the FSQ.
- Melissa: presenting a topic from the news, and pupils responding: I don't care because it's nothing to do with me.
- Orna: the pupil who 'might be married by the time she's 18' ("oh my God")
- Gina: pupil commenting it doesn't work like that in our community – we wouldn't fill out a form.

Initial impressions of curriculum

First taught the FSQ – context

Source texts (and changes over time)

Purpose of teaching literacy

Any planned changes to teaching

Thoughts about the future

Appendix 5:

Noa Analysis: ***their whole world was themselves… we brought it back to them***

Noa qualified as an art teacher twelve years ago but as she struggles to find employment in that area, she worked as a primary teacher for a while before "going sideways" into informal education. She worked for the Jewish National Fund, and following the birth of her children and maternity leave, joined our specialist teaching service in 2010. Noa's first encounter with the English FSQ was not positive: "We didn't have a clue, that's what I remember. They threw this thing at us, they said you're going to teach functional skills English and functional skills Maths and we said okay what is it. No-one knew. It was very wishy-washy at the time, there wasn't like a guideline. We weren't given like a curriculum or anything. We ordered a whole load of books online but they didn't tell us what level we were teaching either, so we had all these things for mixed levels and we weren't sure where to start the girls off. It was a bit of a mess at the beginning to be honest." Out of this chaos, however, emerged an ambitious self-designed curriculum. Noa explained her pupils were assigned to the FSQ because "they hadn't got GCSE and their English was just so bad their written work and their reading". Noa realised she had a variety of levels within the small group and her provisional planning wasn't working: "I needed to kind of put it all together a bit so I did it all history. We did functional skills literacy but we did it through history of women from I think 1914 to 2014, and we read a book. We read the Lottie Project by Jacqueline Wilson because it compared life 100 years ago to life now, so they did a bit of reading with it, they did a bit of history, and then they did all the literacy with it."

Following that first period, Noa said she tended to choose texts which her pupils would "be using again in their lives". She gave an example around travel brochures and guides, justifying this by explaining "they are quite likely to go on holiday in their lives". Indeed, Noa's immediate response to a question about the purpose of studying literacy was in line with the functional literacy paradigm, and in particular calls on the concept of 'job credentials':
"The end game is to give the kids we're teaching skills they need to get further in life. We've had a lot of girls that come in and want to work in a nursery for example… and they need the functional skills to go alongside their qualification. So by giving them the functional skills we're enabling them to get a job which can then lead to them getting a better job."

Reflecting on the way she herself studied English, Noa declared she "was always a massive reader"; she took A levels in Literature, and reading for pleasure was a big part of her life. Reflecting on that, she conceded that pupils who end up only taking the FSQ are missing out on a fundamental aspect of English study: "you're missing all the books. You're missing all the literature. You're missing everything that comes from reading literature. You're missing on being able to learn new vocabulary. You're missing on so many different types of grammar that comes with that. I read all the time. And me and my sisters could never understand people that didn't read. When we were little we just could never understand, what do they do with their time if they're not reading." This realization led to further curriculum developments: Noa explained she integrated reading fiction into her sessions. An example of an activity she gave was using extracts of books as a starting point for her pupils to continue themselves, thereby developing their writing skills as well. Particular fiction texts she mentioned she used were The Lottie Project and War Horse.

Reflecting on the project around women's lives over 100 years, Noa shed some light on the way her curricular decisions were informed by her leaners: "A lot of them are very, when I say

egocentric, their whole world was themselves, is that right, they're the epicentre of their own universe, so they didn't really understand anything that was talking about anyone else. But if you brought it back to them they were very engaged and they would use that. So all the things that we did that they could relate to themselves. So when we did the history, and I had these Downs girls, and they weren't very interested in the history that didn't relate to them at all because they didn't understand how it related to them, but once we brought it forward and we said look how it was then, how is it for you now, let's compare, then they really understood, actually yes it is important to learn about how it used to be for women because that connects to how it is now. And then they kind of understood that. I think they took something from that."

I felt Noa was quite conflicted about the brief of the FSQ, alternating between asserting that 'relevance' was a marker of what was suitable for the curriculum – and this was measured by what pupils are likely to come across in their life, to a broader, more ambitious remit which includes the benefits of engaging with literature and history. In addition, Noa referred to some social aspects of literacy, explaining that while she didn't feel that reading Shakespeare, for example would be of any use to them. She did have a session about Shakespearean sayings which are still used.

It is possibly the functional –utilitarian position that holds most sway with Noa; when I asked how she thinks literacy instruction might affect her pupils' life chances she gave me the following example: "I tutored a girl, and I think I taught her for 2 or 3 years, quite a long time, maybe like 2½ years, and we did all of Level 1 in Literacy, and then as she passed each one, and then we did Level 2 and she passed it all. And she was doing BTEC in Childcare in college and she passed that and she did functional skills, and now she works in a nursery, and she is very happy with her job." Noa still teaches the FSQ and says she has learned to do so effectively by making the content "fit in with their interests".